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At the very doorstep of the United States Mexico has carried forth a Revolution involving not just the chaos of political coups but also the drastic measures of fundamental social and economic reform. This study has been designed to supplement present scholarship in an attempt to understand why Mexico after 1917 escaped the fate dealt by the United States to other countries of the Caribbean who endangered the rights and properties of American citizens. Excellent studies have been made of the role of important individuals in shaping United States policy toward Mexico, but the reaction and influence of public opinion has continued to be a subject for conjecture.

The major purpose of this study has been to examine American reaction to certain events of the Mexican Revolution through the use of contemporary journalism. Since the term Mexican Revolution is used to apply to such an extended period of time and a multitude of events, three years that are especially important for seeing American reaction to the different stages of Mexican property reform have been chosen for investigation: 1917, the year in which the Mexican Constitution with its fundamental revision of foreign property rights in Mexico is written and promulgated; 1926, the year that the Land and Petroleum actually put the constitutional provisions regarding property into effect; and 1938, the year of the major oil expropriations as well as the continuance of the land expropriations for Mexican cooperative ejidos. Primary sources have included all articles in English indexed by the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and the International Index to Periodicals in the years 1917, 1926, and 1938, as well as selected newspapers.

Emphasis has been placed on making these periodical and newspaper readings inclusive of all articles relating in any way to Mexico for the time periods specified.

This study of American journalism has yielded insights into the relationship of the press, public opinion, and the making of United States foreign policy which help to explain why Mexico has been fortunate enough to escape the heavy hand of its northern neighbor. The search for American reaction to Mexican property reform has shown that in 1917 relatively little attention was given to the Mexican Constitution. Even in 1926 American concern over the new Mexican property legislation did not evoke a call for United States intervention. In fact, it was Calles' enforcement of the religious provisions of the Constitution that stimulated the greatest emotional response among Americans in 1926. In 1938, statements regarding the sanctity of property were more frequent than in 1917 or 1926. However, this greater American reaction in behalf of foreign property rights in Mexico was not transformed directly into United States policy because of division in American opinion and the international complications.

American journalism of 1917, 1926, and 1938 does contain several substantial analyses of Mexican economic and social change, an occasional use of technical scholarship to provide perspective for present problems and a large number of enlightened efforts to give perspective to the conflicting issues. However, the overall picture of the news coverage of Mexico in 1917, 1926, and 1938 is marred by great deficiencies. Stereotypes and myths are perpetuated by the superficial nature of most of American journalistic coverage of Mexican events.

U. S. REACTION TO THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION:

AN ANALYSIS OF CONTEMPORARY OPINION

by

Patsy Routh Stephens

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INTRODUCTION

In the twentieth century the response of the United States to foreign revolutions frequently has been of crucial importance to the less powerful nations. In the case of Latin American revolutions, United States reaction has often been the decisive factor in determining their success or failure. Frequently the internal chaos present in Latin American revolutions has caused the United States to intervene in order to protect the lives and investments of American citizens and to secure the Panama Canal zone.

The strategic position of the United States with regard to the Mexican Revolution is pointed out by a sympathetic observer in 1927:

Mexico is engaged in a great social experiment, but this experiment is being made at the door of the richest nation in the world, and the greatest owner of property. Will this great, rich, property-centered nation be willing for Mexico to carry out her experiment?¹

Prior to the 1930's, military and economic intervention is far more typical of the policy of the United States toward Latin American turmoil than "watchful waiting." It is within this perspective that it is particularly interesting to discover why Mexico, after the Pershing expedition in 1916, escapes United States military intervention. Why does Mexican violence, economic, and political chaos, and

¹Samuel G. Inman, Review of The Present Crisis in Our Relations with Mexico, by Amy Blanche Greene, The World Tomorrow, X (May, 1927), 230.

the danger of German influence not provide sufficient reason for the launching of a United States crusade to clean up Mexico, as with Cuba and the Dominican Republic? There would appear to be even greater reason for the United States to attempt to keep order in Mexico since she actually borders the United States. Why does the United States policy toward Mexico not force her either by military intervention or sufficient economic pressure to terminate the fundamental economic and social reforms of her continuing revolution when they endanger the rights and properties of American citizens?

The interplay of many forces appears to be involved in understanding why Mexico escaped the fate dealt by the United States to other countries of the Caribbean who endangered American rights and properties. The individual personalities of those occupying the Presidency, the State Department, and diplomatic posts as well as the influence of the two World Wars and the Depression are important forces in determining the reaction of the United States to the Mexican Revolution. However, American literature on Mexico also suggests that public sentiment played a significant role. Whereas excellent biographical and historical studies have been made of the roles of important individuals in shaping United States policy toward Mexico, statements about the reaction and influence of public opinion appear to be only generalizations; they give no evidence of being based on thorough analysis of contemporary expression. Statements about the nature of public opinion and the propaganda techniques of the press are quite numerous in United States journalistic coverage of Mexican

events. One of the more thorough critical descriptions of the United States coverage of Mexican affairs appears in the May, 1917, issue of The Pan-American Magazine. In his article, "New Life in Mexico," Fielding Provost quotes a statement made by Luis Cabrera, the Mexican Minister of Finance, when speaking to the American Academy of Political and Social Science:

Literature on Mexico which I have found in the United States is of an entirely superficial character such as is contained in newspaper reports or interviews. Consequently, it is tinged with the shallowness based on rumors and intended for telegraphic transmission. In many cases those reports have a political purpose and then the facts are not only inaccurate but are set forth with the intention of moulding public opinion either that of the United States Government or of some political party. In many other cases the literature of Mexico known in the United States is simply imaginative, like the novel or the moving picture exhibition. I do not know of any book, pamphlet or publication on the Mexican situation which has been prepared with a scientific purpose.

It is such charges within contemporary journalism and the gaps I have encountered in previous studies that have enticed me into a more thorough investigation of contemporary opinion.

The major purpose of this study has been to gain insight into the way contemporary journalism has portrayed and reacted to the Mexican

²_{XXV}, 33-34.

Revolution.³ Since the term Mexican Revolution is used to apply to such an extended period of time and a multitude of events, I have chosen to investigate three years that are especially important for seeing the United States reaction to the aspects of the Mexican Revolution affecting property rights—rights held dear by Americans, but ones that have come under serious challenge in twentieth century revolutions.⁴ These three years have been chosen to show American reaction to the different stages of Mexican property reform: 1917, the year in which the Mexican Constitution with its fundamental revision of foreign property rights in Mexico is written and promulgated; 1926, the year that the Land and Petroleum Laws actually attempt to put the constitutional provisions regarding property into effect; and 1938, the year of the major oil expropriations as well as the continuance of the land expropriations for Mexican cooperative ejidos.

The nature of this study makes imperative a spelling out of its scope and the procedures followed. I realize that the value of my

³In his book, The Press and Foreign Policy (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 233-34, Bernard C. Cohen states that "the policy makers reach for the newspaper as an important source of public opinion, as the instrument of 'feedback.' In fact, many officials treat the press and public opinion as synonymous, either explicitly equating them or using them interchangeably. . . . This is the policy makers' major segment of public opinion, a daily referendum of articulate opinion, a surrogate for the body of plastic notions held by the general public that tell the foreign policy makers very little about public feelings and public preferences. In other words, the policy makers reciprocate and support the reporters' contention that they represent and speak for the public in the democratic dialogue between the government and the governed."

⁴I have purposely avoided the years 1910-1916 when American reaction might be more to Mexican chaos than to revolutionary reform.

conclusions or comments regarding American contemporary reaction to Mexican events is governed by the extent of reading and methods of fair sampling upon which they are based. Not being able to include all pamphlets and books in these three years or to determine a fair sampling, I decided that my conclusions would be more scientifically valid if I limited my investigation of contemporary opinion to periodicals and newspapers. My primary sources have included all periodicals in English indexed by the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and the International Index to Periodicals in the years 1917, 1926, and 1938, and selected newspapers. Concurring with the thought expressed by one journalist that "as in love and war anything at all is good ammunition provided it discredits Mexico," I have emphasized making my readings all-inclusive wherever possible.⁵ Not knowing in what unlikely place I might find what is in reality an expression of American reaction to the Mexican Revolution, I have considered all articles in these three years relating in any way to

⁵George A. Miller, "Is There Religious Persecution in Mexico?," The Christian Century, XLIII (April 1, 1926), 411.

Mexico.⁶ Having available the cross-reference facilities of the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, the International Index to Periodicals, and the New York Times Index, I am fairly certain of the completeness of my reading of periodicals for these three years and of the New York Times for 1917, January-June, 1926, and January-March, 1938.⁷

Of necessity I have been confined in my use of newspapers as a source of contemporary opinion to a selected number for specified periods of time. Some care has been given in the selection of newspapers to give a fair representation of opinion. I chose not to include a detailed reading of a border newspaper which would have given a more regional rather than a national reaction. I chose to read more extensively from major newspapers with extensive coverage of foreign news and their own foreign correspondence service, as opposed to the

⁶Quite frequently American attitudes toward Mexican political and social revolution are revealed in articles whose major subjects are anything from archeological expeditions to Mexican art. Such subjects are often the gateway to seeing a respect and appreciation of Mexico's past and present, or in other cases, a stereotype view of barbaric and spiritless Mexicans. An example of pertinent information found in odd places is in "Mexico Builds for the Future," Travel, LXX (January, 1938), 12, 42, 44, 48. The author, Joseph Freeman, shows both in words and pictures how the architectural building in Mexico is indicative of where the revolution is taking Mexico. He notes that both Mexican architecture and Mexican Revolution are following paths of functionalism: they are taking Mexican traditions, and Mexican needs for the future, and under extreme financial limits, making the most from them.

⁷One article indexed by the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature but not available in the Library of Congress because of missing pages from their only copy was "Mexico Continues Drive on Foreign Oil Companies," Scholastic: The American High School Weekly, XXXI (January 22, 1938), 17S.

sampling of numerous small town daily papers.⁸ In choosing to spend so much of my research time reading the New York Times, I was influenced not only by its available index but by its thoroughness of coverage and the fact that its influence upon both United States policy makers and opinion makers is greater than any other one source.⁹ In my analysis I have considered the New York Times not as typical but rather as reflective of the best coverage likely to be given Mexican events in the American daily press. The major portion of my newspaper reading has been from the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, and the Baltimore Sun, but they have been supplemented at times of particular interest by the Washington Post, Philadelphia Public Ledger, New York Herald Tribune, Cleveland Press, Houston Post-Dispatch, New York American, Baltimore American, Detroit Free Press and the Memphis Commercial Appeal.¹⁰ As with periodicals, my emphasis in the reading of these newspapers for the time periods specified in the bibliography has been on including all articles relating to Mexico regardless of the major subject.

⁸Even though writing at a much later date, Bernard Cohen, in his book on The Press and Foreign Policy, p. 9, indicates that the sampling of newspapers is not a problem when dealing with foreign policy because so few papers have foreign policy specialists; most get their coverage from wire services or from the few papers like the New York Times who do maintain coverage.

⁹Cohen, pp. 134-36, 140, 187.

¹⁰An index of sorts is available for the Baltimore Sun in the University of Maryland (College Park) library. The index is on microfilm, very difficult to read, and "organized" in a very unique manner, but it is of great aid if contrasted to a lengthy reading of a paper without an index.

CHAPTER I

1917: U.S. REACTION TO THE MEXICAN CONSTITUTION AND RELATED EVENTS

Introduction

It is only in hindsight that the Mexican Constitution appears to be the most significant Mexican happening of 1917. The coverage of Mexican events by the daily press of that time is somewhat misleading as to what subjects are of lasting significance. There is little coverage of the economic, social, and cultural course of Mexico or of its blueprint and fundamental legal basis for the future. Even a microscopic search in a major newspaper like the Chicago Tribune reveals only a minimum of coverage of the Constitution or the Constitutional Assembly.¹ Of course, the New York Times, as its readers have come to expect, does present substantial and detailed information. Among its articles are long quotations from and paraphrases of the more significant constitutional articles as well as some commentary. However, in proportion to the other news articles on Mexico, those on the Constitution are very few.² Reading the Baltimore Sun, whose coverage of Mexican events is as high in quality as the New York Times,

¹A daily reading of the Chicago Tribune from January --June--the months of heaviest coverage of Mexican events in the New York Times—uncovered only one article directly on the Constitution and two indirectly related.

²Only 16 out of approximately 460 articles of the New York Times on Mexico in 1917 were sufficiently devoted to the topic to appear in the New York Times Index under the subject heading "Constitution" or "Constitutional Congress."

although far less in quantity, leaves one with the same impression. Only 6 of the Baltimore Sun's 144 articles on Mexico during 1917 are about the Constitution. Readers of the daily press interested in Mexico have their attentions drawn not to the Constitution but to headlines of border conflict, rebel movements, evidence of German activity and influence in Mexico, and debate over Wilson's Mexican policy.

A classification of magazine articles in 1917 by major subject reveals a tendency somewhat similar to that of the daily press. Only fourteen out of the sixty articles on Mexico are on the Constitution and the related Constitutional Convention and elections. Thus, it is not the journalistic coverage itself, but the purposes of this study that make the reaction to the 1917 Mexican Constitution assume a heavier weight in this analysis than the more numerous reports of banditry and rebel activity. However, the two are not always unrelated. I have therefore considered to some extent the whole of journalistic response to Mexican events in order to arrive at a more complete view of American reaction to the Mexican constitutional provisions.

Throughout the 1917 periodical coverage of Mexican events there are signs to BEWARE of the "inflammatory stories, garbled press reports from border towns, and a subtle appeal to patriotic sensibilities."³ Numerous accusations against the press range from charges

³David Lawrence, "Mexico Rebuilding," The Independent, XCI (July 28, 1917), 127.

of inadequacy, distortion and superficiality, to intentional moulding of public opinion. They range from emotional indictments to well-reasoned statements backed up with evidence. Newspaper coverage is frequently singled out for the harshest criticism. A February article in The Bellman charges:

It is almost impossible to get a clear view of present internal conditions in the southern republic. The American newspapers, practically without exception, are devoted to the reactionary cause, and their reports concern little save the outrages of lawless bandits and the apparent inability of the Mexican government to suppress them.⁴

A visiting Mexican official, Luis Cabrera, accuses United States newspapers of throwing out most of the news, keeping only that which lends itself to sensational headlines. He is also critical of their tendency to use foreigners who have business interests in Mexico or Mexicans living in the United States as sources of information.⁵

Several authors give substance to their criticisms of the press by showing aspects of Mexico that defend her against the distorted picture of chaos and violence drawn by the newspapers. David Lawrence, the Washington correspondent for the New York Post, describes Querétaro so as to show another side of the Mexico of that day: "There was an atmosphere of bucolic calm about the place which made the words 'chaos' and 'anarchy' and similar phrases fed to the American public at breakfast, seem curiously alien."⁶ In an attempt to place Mexican

⁴"A Bridge to Mexico," XXII (February 24, 1917), 203.

⁵Provost, The Pan-American Magazine, XXV, 34.

⁶The Independent, XCI, 126.

border violence in perspective, another author emphasizes that Mexican lives also are lost on United States territory, although these events get little attention from the press.⁷ David Jordan, in addition to pointing out that all the violence has not been on one side of the border, shows how even factual information can be misleading: "One of my Mexican friends complains with reason that our northern newspapers give more space to a chance hold-up below the lines than to the building of a thousand free schools."⁸ In this attempt to place violence in Mexico in perspective with other happenings there and with conditions in other countries, one author even goes so far as to evoke a comparison with Europe where violence and destruction is so much worse than in Mexico.⁹

Most of the criticism of the press coverage of Mexican events comes from the left, but not all. Liberals are wary of the effect that a distorted view of Mexico might have on United States policy. They are concerned about the dangers of insufficient correct information and the tendency not to think in comparative and analytical rather than just factual terms. They see facts alone as not being enough when looking at Mexico; there is a need to compare conditions now to

⁷George Marvin, "The Quick and the Dead on the Border," The World's Work, XXXVIII (January, 1917), 295.

⁸David Starr Jordan, "The Passing of Don Luis," The Unpopular Review, VIII (July, 1917), 163.

⁹Letter of Mrs. Wm. Mcquadt Wallace to Mrs. Geo. D. Shadburne, Jr., quoted in "The Mexican Revolution," Overland Monthly, LXX (November, 1917), 433-34. Mrs. Wallace's own personal experiences while living in Mexico twenty years provide the basis for her criticism of the press's exaggeration of violence.

what they were a year or two years ago. As so aptly put by one journalist, "facts mean little to the mind that is predisposed to view all in property values."¹⁰

Expressing quite different attitudes—although to place its author without qualification on the right of the spectrum might be misleading—is an article just as ardent in its accusation of the press as those of the liberals. John Barrett in the January issue of The Yale Review accuses the press of taking a few examples in which Americans have caused trouble in Mexico because they have not treated the Mexican and local governments as they would their governments at home and playing these up as representative of the whole.¹¹ In attempting to show Mexico as an excellent place for American investment and trade, he draws attention to the misconceptions of the Mexican people held in the United States. Since so many unfavorable things have been said in the United States about Mexico and Mexicans, he tries to counteract these by bringing out favorable aspects. Although he is attacking some of the same stereotypes of Mexico as the liberal critics of the press, the aspects he chooses to point out are often quite different. He draws attention to the fact that many Mexicans of talent and potential who were driven from Mexico by the violence of earlier revolutions "are anxious to return and aid in the upbuilding of their nation."¹²

¹⁰Lawrence, The Independent, XCI, 126-27. Gregory Mason in "The Hyphen in Mexico," The Outlook, CXV (January 17, 1917), 116 also points out this predisposition of foreigners to judge "every social movement in Mexico simply from the prospect of its immediate effect on dividends."

¹¹"Mexico: A Review and a Forecast," VI (January, 1917), 321.

¹²Ibid., p. 317.

Likewise, he tries to remove the stigma from Mexicans as workers, and American companies as employers with the use of statistics and examples that proclaim their virtues. He also denies that workers voluntarily left their American employers to join the revolutionists.¹³

The extensive criticism of the press coverage of Mexican events in 1917, varied both in tone and source, serves to heighten an already great interest in seeing how a controversial subject or country is portrayed in the United States daily papers and periodicals. One questions what basis there is for such criticism. Could the coverage really be so bad? If so, why and how? Are the offensive stereotypes perpetuated solely by newspaper coverage or by periodicals as well? (Most of the criticisms are made by magazine articles; however, there are a few reports of such criticism in the New York Times.) Are the distortions and promoted misconceptions obvious as in sensationalized or misleading headlines, or are they more insidious as in undercurrents of tone or biased selectivity of facts? Questions such as these would be asked by any analysis of news coverage; however, they require even more attention when charges already have been made by contemporaries.

A Factual Brief on the Mexican Constitution

The major source of contemporary factual information on the 1917 Mexican Constitution is the New York Times. Appearing several months after the immediate reactions are a few realistic and substantial articles, most significant of which is one on property rights by

¹³Ibid., pp. 315, 317, 320.

J. P. Chamberlain in the September issue of the Political Science Quarterly, and a translation of the 1917 Constitution compared to that of 1857, published as a May supplement to The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science. Since this latter source of information is in separate hard-bound form and probably not so readily available as New York Times quotations from the Constitution, there is sufficient reason to doubt its extensive influence on public opinion, or even the reactions of opinion makers in these early months. Thus, it does not appear prejudicial regarding 1917 opinion to look at the facts of the Mexican Constitution as they are presented to the American public by the New York Times.

Before the first major article on January 26, the New York Times reveals in short articles the "Mexico for Mexican" bent of the Constitutional Congress. It gives several details on the Constitution about the limits of the use of martial law, imprisonment, fines, and the necessity of a search warrant to search private property. It also notes that the holding of the presidency is limited to one term. Information significant in that it is related to one of the centers of controversy in the months and years to follow is contained in the January 21 short article entitled "Radical Land Bill Proposed." In a factual manner without commentary regarding American interests, it tells of the committee proposals to limit personal holdings of land to 200 acres and business to what is needed for their development, to annul all purchases of land since 1857, to restore all ejidos that are in the hands of "private individuals or companies," and to nationalize

oil lands.¹⁴ On the front page of the January 22 issue of the New York Times, although subordinated to the headlines of the National Guardsmen returning from the border, are significant details showing the Constitution to favor Mexicans over foreign-born both for concessions and government jobs; also noted are the restrictions against foreigners serving as police or in the armed forces in peace time.

Important article headlines and subheadings give expression on January 26 to United States fears and protests concerning the Mexican Constitution. Subheadings such as "Rights of Foreigners Abridged in Proposed Changes, Lansing Complains to Carranza," "Fears Retroactive Effect," and "Practical Confiscation of American-Owned Properties Possible under Certain Pending Provisions" impress upon even those who only scan the news the dangers facing U.S.-Mexican relations. Secretary of State Lansing expresses concern and protest about the provisions of the proposed constitution that give the executive power to determine what property is necessary for a company to carry out what it was formed to do, that declare no exemptions from taxes—a rule which may be applied retroactively to cases where former contracts exist for tax exempt periods—and that require all concessions on oil lands to be renewed during the year. The latter he calls practical nationalization, and implies that future relations between the United

¹⁴Sec. 1, p. 5.

States and Mexico are at stake.¹⁵ The substance of this article also appears in the Chicago Tribune but without the big headlines. The Chicago Tribune also points out the threat to relations with Mexico. It notes that these protests were brought about after the complaints of many American citizens who own property in Mexico.¹⁶

New York Times coverage of the first week of February relates the completion of the Mexican Constitution and the receipt of a copy by the United States. It points out the advanced labor legislation, the measures stripping the Church of its power and taking its land, and possibly anti-foreign provisions. It does not stress the anti-foreign interpretations but instead makes a more positive introduction: "Many of the articles are based on the theory of Mexico for Mexicans." Its notation that "all natural resources in Mexico are declared to be the property of the government" is stated factually with no comment.¹⁷ Upon receipt of a copy of the Constitution by the United States, it points out that one controversial aspect regarding a foreigner giving up his privilege to call upon his own government has been taken from Article 33 and placed in the article regarding land.¹⁸ In a tiny

¹⁵New York Times, p. 10. It perhaps is of some significance to note that this first protest of the United States over certain constitutional provisions was made prior to its being finished and signed. In later years Mexicans express great dismay about the tendency of the United States to try to influence the very formation of their laws.

¹⁶January 26, 1917, p. 2.

¹⁷February 1, 1917, p. 7.

¹⁸The United States had hoped to get this clause removed. The change of position does give it a more restricted meaning.

article entitled "Constitution Proclaimed" the New York Times notes that for some provisions to be put into effect legislation will have to be passed; however, elections will take place now according to its directives.

On February 22 in the New York Times and February 21 in the Chicago Tribune very brief but significant coverage is given to a subject somewhat related to the Constitution: property laws affecting the mine owners. The New York Times drawing its interpretation from the recently appointed United States Ambassador to Mexico is reassuring both in its article headlines—"Mexican Mine Titles Safe: Fletcher Thinks Carranza's Decrees Won't Affect American Owners"—and in the article itself. This reassurance is based on a statement of Carranza that no decrees have been issued that will affect mines owned by foreigners with "clear title," and also on that portion of the Constitution that no laws can be retroactive in Mexico.¹⁹ However, the effect of the Chicago Tribune is different. It states that for those mine owners who have not resumed work and also not filed their reason by December 14 in order to get an extension of time, there is danger of a Carranza takeover. It does not moderate the effects of this statement with qualifying information. It only notes that most of those in danger of confiscation are small mines because the big ones have filed for and got extensions.²⁰

¹⁹February 22, p. 8.

²⁰February 21, p. 3.

The remainder of the New York Times February and March coverage of the 1917 Mexican Constitution consists of two major articles with extensive information and commentary in the February 25 and March 18 Sunday editions, two editorials which take a far more severe tone than one would expect from the information in the New York Times news columns, a letter to the editor that denounces the Constitution as being written only by a political faction, and a notation of a heavy oil export tax awaiting Carranza's signature. The headlines of the lengthy articles of February 25 and March 18 herald the fact that Mexico plans some radical change: "MEXICO WILL TEST UTOPIAN THEORIES: Radical New Constitution Goes Further Than That of Any Other Country—Aliens' Rights Curtailed" and on March 18 "DRASTIC CHANGES PLANNED IN MEXICO: New Constitution Especially Affects Religious Sects and Labor Situation—Severe toward Foreigners."²¹ As somewhat accurately indicated in the headlines and subheadings these two lengthy articles give major attention, including quotations and details, to those portions of the Constitution involving religion, foreigners, and labor reforms. With regard to the church, they make note of such things as the nationalization of the clergy, ministers not being allowed to teach nor take part in politics, marriage having to be by civil contract, and monastic vows being prohibited. Articles 32 and 33 regarding respectively the preference of Mexicans over foreigners for government jobs and concessions and the executive power to expel foreigners "without judicial process" are quoted and discussed. Perhaps

²¹February 25, 1917, sec. 7, p. 3; March 18, 1917, sec. 10, p. 6.

most attention of all goes to the advanced labor legislation. The March 18 article includes long quotes from Article 123 and both articles list many details of the reforms, some of which the United States did not have in 1917 but which supporters of the Progressive movement had sought. Included among the things they enumerate are maximum hour and minimum wage provisions, rules for women and children, standards of living for workmen in different places, overtime pay regulations, employer responsibility for accidents, and legality of unions, strikes, and lockouts.

Article 27, although the portion of it regarding concessions has already been seen as a subject of Lansing's protest on January 26, is not the big center of attention and controversy in 1917 that it becomes in later years. Article 27 includes the conditions under which private property can be expropriated—only for "public utility and by means of indemnification!" It authorizes the division of "large landed estates," and gives a broader scope to its definition of national ownership of sub-soil minerals. (Ownership is inalienable; only concessions to work are granted by the State.) Under its provisions foreigners are also forbidden to acquire ownership of land within 100 kilometers of the frontier or 50 kilometers of the sea coast. In order for a foreigner to be granted concessions to work the sub-soil wealth of Mexico, he must agree to be considered as a

Mexican citizen with regard to his property, not calling on his government for its protection.²²

J. P. Chamberlain in his article "Property Rights Under the New Mexican Constitution" provides the only substantial breakdown and illumination of Article 27 available in 1917.²³ He provides much of this illumination by the use of logic and frequent comparison to United States legal concepts and practices. He deals both with theory and scholarly speculation as to the possible ways it may be carried out. In examining the protection an individual would have for his property, he notes Article 14's guarantee against retroactive legislation and Article 27's specification that "public utility" is the only legal reason for expropriation and that to be by payment. He does point out though that unlike earlier constitutions it does not say that payment must be made before property is taken, and that the purposes for which property may be taken under Article 27 in Mexico are broader than the interpretation of "public interest" in the United States. He also notes that at least in theory the Mexican Federal Government has more power over private property than the United States in that it, not the states, has the police power.²⁴ However, in emphasizing the great power the Constitution places in the hands of Congress in the case of the police power and in the hands of

²²H. N. Branch, trans., "The Mexican Constitution of 1917 Compared with the Constitution of 1857," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, LXXI Supplement (May, 1917), 16-19.

²³Political Science Quarterly, XXXII (September, 1917), 373-74.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 370-71, 376.

the Executive, he stresses that it can be used for good or ill. With regard to the power of Congress, he mentions the possibility that the courts might assume a restraining position similar to that existing in the United States, but realistically notes that "the serious guarantee will be the intelligence of the electorate, and the character and wisdom of the men who represent it in the congress."²⁵

Chamberlain appears quite aware of the agricultural traditions of Mexican peons and able to anticipate the twentieth century problems of the small individual farmer in his comments on land distribution in Mexico under Article 27. He points out that it would be possible for the Mexican Government to carry out the purposes of the Constitution to return land to the peons in the style of that done in Yucatan by using what already belongs to the nation and that confiscated from the church. Thus, there would be "little need for proceeding against privately owned estates in the interest of peon ownership."²⁶

The somewhat sympathetic tone of Chamberlain while he discusses giving land to the peons is replaced by sternness as he deals with that part of Article 27 relating to concessions. He describes the provision regarding concessions as "confiscatory" because "the person formerly the owner of the coal or oil underlying his land is so no more, though the value may have been the most important element in the purchase price."²⁷ Chamberlain points out that the part of Article 14

²⁵Ibid., p. 376.

²⁶Ibid., p. 383.

²⁷Ibid., p. 371.

against retroactive legislation appears not to apply to Congress' power regarding concessions.²⁸ He also notes that although a similar provision existed in the old constitution restricting foreigners from calling on their own government for protection against Mexican judgments, this older law lacked the enforcement power of Article 27 which says that if such is done, the property will be forfeited.²⁹

Reaction to the Constitution

The relatively little coverage given to the 1917 Mexican Constitution by the American press is not due solely to the overwhelming attention given to the European war or to the immediately more interesting possibility of a withdrawal of Pershing's troops from Mexico. Probably more significant in explaining the minimum coverage is the nature of a large element of the American response to the Mexican Constitution. Although the Constitution includes articles potentially dangerous to American interests in Mexico, there is a general lack of fear displayed. There is a presumption on the part of many that the Constitution will not be carried out to the letter.³⁰ One American nationalist even goes so far as to make fun of some of its measures affecting foreigners and to suggest that a Mexican constitution should never be taken seriously: "Mexicans have never shown a united and patriotic regard for any of their previous Constitutions, and it is

²⁸Ibid., p. 387.

²⁹Ibid., p. 377.

³⁰"Mexico's Inhospitability to Missions," The Literary Digest, LIV (April 14, 1917), 1066.

hardly rash to predict that the first violators of this latest product of radical zeal will be Mexicans."³¹

In 1917 the majority of American journalistic opinion certainly does not indicate a "jumping-to-arms" reaction of Americans to the Mexican Constitution. This lack of excitedness is not largely due to a lack of information about the provisions of the Constitution. (As seen above, the New York Times supplies a reasonable amount of factual data. It also provides possible cause for United States alarm in some of its realistic commentary and in several harsh attacks on the more inflammable sections regarding religion and property rights.) There appears to be a tendency as far as the Constitution is concerned to display a type of practical realism which sees time to be on the side of the United States. An August article in Current Opinion assures the American public that "all radical administrations become conservative in time."³² Similarly, the September issue of The American Review of Reviews points out that of necessity the "anti-foreigner policy of the new constitution" will yield somewhat to inviting foreign cooperation.³³ The call for reasonableness on the part of the United States comes from a variety of sources. Both the voices of Protestant opinion and those of scholarship emphasize the necessity of suspending

³¹"Mexico's Constitution," The Outlook, CXV (March 14, 1917), 453-54.

³²"The Roman Catholic Grievance in Mexico," LXIII (August, 1917), 111.

³³"The Present State of Mexico," LVI, 281.

judgment and reaction until Mexico's constitutional provisions are further interpreted.³⁴ The author of the most scholarly analysis of the aspects of the Mexican Constitution affecting property rights includes the following in his comments on the controversial Article 27: "Many of its provisions, in particular the concluding paragraph, depend upon legislation for their interpretation, and the laws, not the constitution will be at fault if unfairness results."³⁵

Not all reactions to the Constitution were such as to minimize its possible effects or to advise suspension of United States action until more than words—at least uninterpreted words—were at stake. In fact, one author points to the error in this way of thinking when writing in protest to an earlier decree of Carranza which could easily be misused to confiscate American-owned mining property. He emphasizes that the government must protest now rather than waiting until some action occurs when it will be to no avail.³⁶ There are also other commentators on the Mexican scene, while maintaining a factual or realistic coverage, who point out with reasonable certainty that the Constitution "is not to be regarded as merely a scrap of paper" at least with regard to certain aspects.³⁷ About some radical parts of

³⁴"The Government and Missions in Mexico," The Missionary Review of the World, XL (November, 1917), 801-802. Although making some harsh comments on the Constitution, The New York Times in its February 13, 1917 editorial, p. 10 also indicates that judgment should be suspended until some provisions have been further studied and clarified.

³⁵Chamberlain, Political Science Quarterly, XXXII, 389.

³⁶Roland G. Usher, "Carranza's New Industrial Policy," North American Review, CCV (March, 1917), 402.

³⁷"The Eight-Hour Day for Vera Cruz," The Survey, XXXIX (December 29, 1917), 372.

the Constitution they are not sure—perhaps they will not be vigorously enforced—but the provisions against foreigners probably will be because of present feeling in Mexico.³⁸

A February editorial in the New York Times makes clear some distinctions frequently drawn from fundamental American concepts. It states that the purpose of Mexico's Constitution to help the masses of Mexican people is "admirable," but that "an organic law, which, while striving to benefit the many, works rank injustice to the few must be radically defective."³⁹ One of the injustices the editorial shows it is concerned with is the requirement that foreigners give up their right to call on their own government if their land is taken. With regard to that part of the Constitution restricting the rights of the clergy, the New York Times comments that "the Mexican idea of freedom is confused with intolerance."⁴⁰

Among those elements of journalistic opinion whose response to the Mexican Constitution is less tempered and whose inclusion of factual information is perhaps subordinated to their own viewpoint are both those who embrace the social and economic results of the Mexican Revolution as being in tune with American ideals and those who denounce all it represents. Of interest to those who would try to

³⁸"Mexico and the World War," The World's Work, XXXIII (March, 1917), 472; Arthur Constantine, "The New Mexican Constitution and Reforms," The Outlook, CXV (March 14, 1917), 455.

³⁹February 26, 1917, p. 8. Such distinctions are not only evident in expressions of American opinion but appear to help shape United States policy in the 1920's and 1930's.

⁴⁰Ibid.

understand the public sentiments in the year 1917 is the fact that there are far fewer wholesale condemnations of the Mexican Constitution than there are those who point to the similarities between it and that of the United States and approvingly draw attention to its advanced labor and social reforms. American liberals sympathetic to Mexican reform most frequently highlight its provisions for an eight-hour work day, regulation of the pay for overtime, restrictions on hours and conditions under which women and children can work, employers' liability for labor accidents, voting rights for self-supporting single women, and minimum-wage laws. They point to its emphasis on local government, its decentralization of education and its restriction on the participation of military men in politics—all things significant for showing Mexico as working toward an American-style democracy.⁴¹ In recording his observations, one journalist writes: "In studying the language of their new constitutions one is greatly impressed with the evidence that they were molded on the Constitution of the United States and corrected by our experience."⁴²

There is a tendency for those who highlight the economic and social reforms of Mexico's Constitution also to show the Constituent Assembly and elections in a good and meaningful light. They stress the

⁴¹Bernard Gallant, "Making Laws for Mexico: The New Spirit Revealed in Mexico's Constituent Congress," The Survey, XXXVII (January 20, 1917), 451; "Mexico's Constituent Congress," The American Review of Reviews, LV (February, 1917), 184.

⁴²A. S. Hobart, "Conscience or Conduct," The Outlook, CXV (February 7, 1917), 243.

civilian nature of the Constituent Congress and suggest the variety and representativeness of its composition.⁴³ To make evident the meaningfulness of the Mexican elections in terms of fairness and the freedom exercised, American liberals place them in perspective with what came before in Mexico.⁴⁴ The New York Times emphasizes the "fair and orderly manner" in which they were held, and notes that the Indians voted for the first time and were very interested in their part in the election. Its headlines also include the fact that a woman was elected to the House.⁴⁵ One article trying to show the legitimacy of the Carranza election compares the percentage voting for Carranza to that in the United States voting for Wilson in 1912 and 1916.⁴⁶ Interesting, and somewhat humorous to the writer of another era is the story told about Carranza's wiring the Constituent Assembly to ask them to postpone its starting date until he could get there on horseback. The delegates' reply that "'it is against the law,'" making evident the new spirit in Mexico where not even a leader is above the law.⁴⁷

The Constituent Congress and elections in Mexico were not always

⁴³Gallant, The Survey, XXXVII, 449, 451.

⁴⁴"The Mexican Elections," The Outlook, CXV (March 21, 1917), 498.

⁴⁵March 12, 1917, p. 11.

⁴⁶"President Carranza," The Bellman, XXII (March 17, 1917), 287.

⁴⁷Gallant, The Survey, XXXVII, 449.

treated so kindly even in 1917.⁴⁸ The Chicago Tribune with its sparsity of information does find space to mention a possible slaying in the Constitutional Congress.⁴⁹ Suggesting the invalidity of any work of the assembly, a March 14 article in The Outlook points out that the delegates to the Constitutional Convention were chosen in what amount to "farcical elections."⁵⁰ Although no real details are given to back this up, the charge is made. Another example of the denial of any meaning Mexican elections might appear to have is a story somewhat reminiscent of one segment of literature about the American Negroes during Reconstruction. The Mexicans are shown as simple, childlike, and lacking in any eagerness to vote. In the story when the Government couriers come to get their votes, twenty-six Mexicans are shown asking who they should vote for and when not getting an answer from the man telling the story, twenty-three of the twenty-six men return to their work without voting and three follow the advice of the couriers.⁵¹

Those who tried to categorize the 1917 Mexican Constitution had some difficulty. It is described as modern, and thought progressive by some, radical by others.⁵² On the one hand it is defended against

⁴⁸The worst attacks, however, come later after portions of the Constitution were put into action. See below p. 106.

⁴⁹January 6, 1917, p. 2.

⁵⁰"Mexico's Constitution, LXV, 453.

⁵¹W. A. Joubert, "The Problem of the Mexican Peon," Harper's Magazine, CXXXV (July, 1917), 275.

⁵²G. B. Winton, "Mexico Redivivus," The Survey, XXXVIII (August 11, 1917), 415.

being evidence of Mexico's drift toward socialism.⁵³ On the other hand, by emphasizing its portions opposing religion it is shown as evidence that "the reactionary party is in full control."⁵⁴ Attempting to be realistic in its evaluation, The Nation emphasizes the variety within the Constitution: "Many things are admirable, some are highly questionable, and the whole is undeniably open to the charge that it represents rather a great scheme of social renovation than a workable plan of government."⁵⁵ Its most caustic critic charges it with being "so advanced that it may be considered distinctively class legislation." He also points out details of its inconsistencies and makes somewhat of a wholesale condemnation:

Economically, the document of Querétaro is dangerous because the precarious tenure system it provides will surely throttle foreign initiative and alienate foreign capital; socially, it is impracticable, for the economic conditions of the country do not justify the enactment nor permit the enforcement of legislation of the type proposed; politically, it lacks the sanction of the majority of the people because it disregards the very promises of the party, and because it denies to the inhabitants of the republic those rights generally recognized and respected in all civilized communities, including the right of conscience and even the right to life.⁵⁶

The entanglements of the Mexican Constitution and United States reaction to it are such as frequently to make it impossible to extricate them in order to gauge a pure reaction to some of the

⁵³Gallant, The American Review of Reviews, LV, 184.

⁵⁴"The Elimination of Religion and Education from Mexico," The Independent, LXXXIX (March 26, 1917), 526.

⁵⁵"The New Mexican Constitution," CIV (May 10, 1917), 571.

⁵⁶Salvador Martínez de Alva, "The Mexican Constitution of 1917," American Political Science Review, XI (May, 1917), 380.

Constitution's revolutionary concepts. And, in fact, it is impossible to rid other events of the suspicious undercurrent already established by it in United States-Mexican relations. For example, the increased coverage of rebel activities and the questioning of the stability of the Carranza government by the daily press is not necessarily unrelated to the reaction to the Constitution. In fact, in 1917 this picture of turmoil and chaos was perhaps the quickest way to produce effective United States action as evinced in our interventions in other parts of Latin America.⁵⁷ The most severe strain in United States-Mexican relations developed in March and April. During these months there is a growing questioning and suspicion regarding both the German danger in Mexico and the future policies of Mexico. (The Mexican Constitution takes effect May 1.) Thus, to get a total picture of United States reaction to the 1917 Mexican Constitution it is necessary to look somewhat at the whole of United States-Mexican relations in 1917.

U.S. Concern over German Influence in Mexico

The United States reaction to the Mexican Constitution was still very much in the making when the Zimmermann bombshell was dropped on the American public on March 1, 1917. All of a sudden actions of Mexico that hitherto had not aroused great suspicions made sense; to

⁵⁷Advocates of a new Mexican policy that would more closely resemble our Cuban policy of that time had important spokesmen including the Chicago Tribune. See below pp. 48, 49, 51.

many they now added up to proof of German influence.⁵⁸ Appearing on the front page of the March 15 issue of the New York Times is an article that claims Germans are in control of Mexico. The New York Times notes that according to a neutral government source, German bankers are in control of Mexico's finances and the German legations, its diplomatic affairs. What is more, it even goes on to link the Mexican Constitution to the German cause:

Several of its provisions apparently were devised as means of assisting the cause of Germany in Mexico at the expense of the interests of the Entente Allies and the United States.

Article 27 of the new constitution, which provided for the confiscation of concessions of property of foreigners is regarded as especially dangerous to the Entente Allies and neutrals in general. Developments in the near future, the reports indicate, will be directed at ousting from control of the oil fields American, British, Dutch, and other interests.⁵⁹

Somewhat similarly, in the August issue of The World's Work, when George Marvin attempts to separate the real German dangers to Tampico oil from those that are largely imaginary he points accusingly to the Mexican central government and the Constitution. He shows the Constitution to be dangerous to the allies' oil supplies: he points out that it not only says there will be "'no exemption from taxation'" which increases their costs but that under it Mexico can also take over the United States and British oil wells at any time. Thus, it is his conclusion that it is not sabotage or other direct acts of Germans in

⁵⁸Associated Press Dispatch, March 1, 1917, New York Times, p. 2; Baltimore Sun, p. 1; Chicago Tribune, p. 2.

⁵⁹March 15, 1917, p. 1.

Mexico that should cause alarm to the United States but German influence "in Mexico City to bring about one or both of these restrictive measures."⁶⁰ Marvin, not sure of the nature of the German influence but thinking it probably indirect, advocates that the United States should make it clear to Mexico that to carry out constitutional measures against Tampico oil fields is to serve the German interest.⁶¹

In addition to these attempts to separate fact from fiction with regard to the German danger to Mexican oil, periodical coverage of Mexico in 1917 includes some significant background information on the Germans' ability to influence Mexicans. One article contrasts the tenor of the actions of Americans in Mexico to that of the Germans there. It points out that the Americans in Mexico tend to show their independence and superior race by being non-adaptable, whereas the Germans in Mexico pride themselves not only in being hard workers like the Americans but on being highly adaptable, knowing how to ingratiate themselves by adopting the customs and speaking the language.⁶²

Several sources confirm the popularity of the Germans in Mexico in

⁶⁰"The Jeopardy of Tampico," XXXIV, 380. "Why the Mexican Oil-Fields are Guarded Like Diamond-Mines," Current Opinion, LXIII (October, 1917), containing many quotations from Marvin, and "German Efforts in Mexico," The World's Work, XXXV (December, 1917) come to these same conclusions. The latter on p. 210 also stresses that the German danger is not through the military but through pressure brought to bear on Carranza.

⁶¹The World's Work, XXXIV, 389.

⁶²R. B. Cunninghame Graham, Review of Mexico by Mrs. Alec Tweedie, The English Review, XXV (December, 1917), 511-12.

comparison to other foreigners. Another factor making for better German-Mexican relations is that Germany, in contrast to the United States, has not had to continually pressure Carranza about law and order because German property is commercial rather than natural wealth.⁶³ However, even many of the same articles that point to the potential power of Germany as a commercial rival or as a diplomatic influence on Mexico conclude optimistically. They assure Americans that there is no reason for fear. They point out that there is no evidence of a move against the United States and the probability of a Mexican alliance with Germany has already declined.⁶⁴

Even prior to the publication of the Zimmermann note some connection had been made between our experiences with Mexico and the European War. Those who pushed a preparedness policy for the United States drew from the obvious example in the daily press. In their arguments for universal military service, they cite the Pershing punitive expedition. They note how it exposed the inadequacies and inefficiencies of relying on the state militia even to defend the border. More specifically, the Chicago Tribune in February was especially active in showing Mexico as "our exposed flank," either for Germans or for a German-influenced Mexico. Its editorials are filled with harsh criticism of Wilson's policy. They point out "the folly of our failure to settle the Mexican difficulty while we were free to act

⁶³"German Efforts in Mexico," The World's Work, XXXV, 210.

⁶⁴Arthur Bullard, "Germany-Mexico-Japan," The Outlook, CXV (March 14, 1917), 456; Mason, The Outlook, CXV, 105.

undisturbed. . . . If we had acted with vigor and common sense it would not now be exposed and we should at this time have a seasoned army of respectable proportions."⁶⁵ In fact, all of the information on Mexico in the February news and editorial columns of the Chicago Tribune tends to form a negative picture of Mexico, of Carranza, and of Wilson's policy. The Chicago Tribune draws attention to Mexican internal violence and border raids, German presence and influence, British fear for her oil interests, danger of confiscation of small mines, and purchase of munition-making machinery from Japan. It also gives a most severe and ridiculing reception to Carranza's peace efforts. In its portrayal of the Mexican refugees following Pershing's returning troops, the Chicago Tribune attempts to stir up American empathy; however, its editorial sardonically comments that "possibly the American people would not be so indifferent to this pathetic column working its way out of danger if the column were composed of Armenians fleeing from the Turks."⁶⁶

Although the February coverage of Mexican events by the New York Times and the Baltimore Sun also includes information on internal violence, rebel movements, and rumors of German activity, they do not dwell on these matters because of other more positive things that are

⁶⁵February 10, 1917, p. 6.

⁶⁶February 6, 1917, p. 6. In several previous editorials the Chicago Tribune has satirized the way Americans view European and Mexican situations differently.

also mentioned. The arrival of the newly appointed Ambassador Fletcher in Mexico receives good notice and extensive attention in the New York Times. The Bellman points out Fletcher's particularly good qualifications for this position, even to suggesting that he will serve as a "bridge to Mexico." It stresses the importance of restoring the normalized channels for solving problems.⁶⁷ One source attributes this change, from military operations such as Pershing's to civilian relations under Fletcher, to the European crisis.⁶⁸ (The Baltimore Sun had suggested earlier that the United States had decided "a fully accredited diplomatic officer" in Mexico desirable because of some of the reforms that were being considered at Querétaro.⁶⁹) The New York Times does state that "the State Department's anxiety to get Ambassador Fletcher to his post has been increased by the rupture of relations with Germany, since it is recognized as a probability that hostilities would give rise to many problems which it would be desirable for an accredited diplomatic representative to handle."⁷⁰

Carranza's note to all neutrals regarding joint efforts to end the war by mediation and an embargo received widespread attention in the daily press and periodicals. According to the Baltimore Sun, the note

⁶⁷"A Bridge to Mexico," XXII, 203.

⁶⁸"Through the School Door Into Mexico," The Survey, XXXVII (February 24, 1917), 605.

⁶⁹January 5, 1917, p. 2.

⁷⁰February 8, 1917, p. 12.

"was received with expressions of mingled amusement and gravity in official quarters."⁷¹ Long quotations in some of the daily papers allow readers to detect for themselves any possible reasonableness of Carranza's position. However, to pre-World War II ears there was no ring of familiarity or truth to Carranza's position. Carranza maintained that this is a war "without any precedent in the history of humanity," requiring the rethinking of the rights and role of neutrals.⁷² United States views range from suspicion of German influence to absolute certainty of it and this note being proof. Even the most benevolent press accounts point out that what Carranza has suggested is contrary to international law and United States views of neutrality. The New York Times goes on to mention that there are some who think the fact that Carranza would make such a suggestion is indicative of German influence.⁷³

Reaction to Carranza's note tends to become a personal attack as well as a signal of the possible German influence in Mexico. A February 14 editorial in the New York Times points out that this Carranza note is some repayment for the "gracious" treatment the United States has given Carranza lately; perhaps the United States government should begin to take the German danger in Mexico more seriously.⁷⁴

⁷¹February 13, 1917, p. 3.

⁷²New York Times, February 13, 1917, p. 1.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴p. 8.

The front-page news article in the Chicago Tribune appears under the heading "CARRANZA OUT AS THE KAISER'S PEACEMAKER?" Its satirical onslaught does not confine itself just to the proof of German influence at hand in Carranza's note, but goes on to embrace other emotion-laden issues: "It is believed that unusual considerations influenced Carranza to place himself in the ludicrous attitude of disregarding the anarchy in his own land, the slaughter of Americans, and the destruction of American property, while preaching peace and brotherly love to Europe,"⁷⁵ Although the Chicago Tribune's front-page news column appears to be sufficiently vivid and opinionated to serve as its editorial comment on the subject of Carranza's note to neutral nations, such is not the case. Its February 14 editorial, "Mischief Again in Mexico," lambasts Carranza's character still further. It refers to his "genius for malevolence" and portrays him as "that purring Latin feline," "that Latin soul . . . shot through with poisonous intent toward the United States."⁷⁶

With the publication of the Zimmermann note, what had been an occasional rumor in the daily press becomes a steady stream of suspicions. Rumors and supposedly factual information on the establishment of wireless communication between Mexico and Germany, German submarine activity off the coast of Mexico, and United States Germans amassing in Mexico increasingly supplement the debate on the extent of the Mexican involvement with German plans. There is,

⁷⁵February 13, 1917.

⁷⁶p. 8.

however, some variance in the degree of suspicion in which Carranza and Mexico are held, and there is a definite fluctuation with time.

The New York Times immediate reaction to the Zimmermann note is to affirm its confidence in Carranza's Mexico, indicating that it does not expect United States-Mexican relations to be hurt. As evidence of Mexico's friendly desires, it points to the "attentions" given to Ambassador Fletcher.⁷⁷ A March 2 article expressing its faith in Carranza in a somewhat backhanded but interesting way indicates that United States recognition of Carranza and sending of Fletcher messed up the German "plot to oust Carranza."⁷⁸ But with the passing of days and still no statement from Carranza denying his knowledge of the Zimmermann note, the editorials of the New York Times become more critical. Although they still maintain that Carranza is the best of possible candidates, suspicions appear to be growing.⁷⁹ A March 10 editorial states: "Evidence that Mr. Carranza is a party to this plot against the United States would have a serious bearing upon our future relations with Mexico."⁸⁰ Pointing out the tolerance and patience that have characterized United States policy toward Mexico hitherto, it goes on to note that intervention would be justified even in the eyes of Latin America if Carranza has become or does become "pals"

⁷⁷March 3, 1917, p. 1.

⁷⁸p. 7.

⁷⁹March 4, 1917, sec. 7, p. 2.

⁸⁰p. 10.

with Germany.⁸¹ Even though there is growing impatience and suspicion of Carranza's Mexico reflected in its editorial columns, the New York Times news sections continue to include expression of confidence in Carranza and Mexico. Good coverage is given to Fletcher's expression of faith in Mexican neutrality. He continues to maintain that Von Eckhardt did not approach Carranza with the Zimmermann offer and also states that he believes Mexico will remain neutral.⁸²

The news columns of the New York Times in March do give voice to the multiple facts and rumors of German activity and influence in Mexico, but they also include denials by factual reports and substantial articles which attempt to separate the fact from the fiction.⁸³ Another feature of the New York Times March coverage, in contrast to other major papers such as the Baltimore Sun and the Chicago Tribune, is the inclusion of some astute questioning of the source and timing of the Zimmermann revelation. In reporting German views on March 6, 1917, the front-page article headlines read "BERLIN SEES A WILSON TRICK: Says He Invented a 'Plot' in Order to Stampede Congress." The suggestion that Wilson pulled off the Zimmermann note in order to achieve what he wanted in foreign policy does not come solely through the mouth of Germany, but in a feature article that offered among other things a substantial analysis of the German-Mexican intrigue.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²March 11, 1917, sec. 1, p. 2.

⁸³March 16, 1917, p. 7 and March 29, 1917, p. 8 are examples of such denials.

As a part of her somewhat cutting remarks on American immaturity,
Mary Austin comments:

Mr. Wilson knew his United States well when he reserved his announcement of German machinations in Mexico for this dramatic moment. It is the only way American attention can be caught by it, and we are arrested by it largely because it is clumsy and obvious; here is a veritable document with a name signed to it and specific plans outlined.⁸⁴

She insists that the Zimmermann note is not the reason for fighting Germany; there was sufficient reason for the United States to fight before, but that a stunt like the Zimmermann note was necessary to rally the United States.⁸⁵

The editorial comment of the Chicago Tribune continues in much the same vein in March that it had established in February or earlier. It continues to demand a new Mexican policy from Wilson, calling for the United States to clean up Mexico to prevent her from letting in our enemies.⁸⁶ Attempting to play the role of the realist, the Chicago Tribune stresses the necessity for United States action, not just emotional talk.⁸⁷ Even in its news columns there appears to be a greater and more immediate suspicion of Carranza than in the New York Times. An example of the type of jeering remarks that cut Carranza can be found on the front page of the March 3 Chicago Tribune in an article by a special Washington correspondent, Arthur Sears Henning: "Japan is not suspected of having knowledge of the plot or of having encouraged

⁸⁴New York Times, March 11, 1917, sec. 7, p. 3.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶March 2, 1917, p. 6.

⁸⁷March 4, 1917, sec. 2, p. 4.

Germany to propose the anti-American alliance, but faith in the impregnability of the Carranza character to German blandishment is not entertained by any one, except possibly the president."

The Chicago Tribune does give coverage to German views and reaction to the Zimmermann note; however, it shows no suspicions of the Entente letting the Zimmermann note come into United States hands. In one editorial though, it does suggest the possibility of Germany letting it fall into our hands.⁸⁸ Throughout the month much attention is given to German plots in Mexico and Mexican rebel activity, as well as to the harsh criticism of Wilson's Mexican policy.

A reading of the New York American for the first portion of March reveals that the differences in its coverage from that of the major papers already mentioned is more in tone and headlines, than in substance. There is a tendency to be more authoritarian, a tone partially achieved by the choice of verbs.⁸⁹ The information in the New York American is largely the same, except perhaps a little more doubt is expressed about Mexico's—although not Japan's—part in the Zimmermann affair. However, there is a curious item from the International News Service which suggests that Germany has more to the Mexican offer than Mexico will hear about if the United States does not start dealing more fairly with Germany.⁹⁰

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Note the contrast in tone between the March 2 front-page article in the Chicago Tribune "PLOT NOTE IS AUTHENTIC" and those of the New York American: "CARRANZA IS TOLD TO CURB PLOTTERS: Washington Demands First Chief Curb German Propaganda . . . Mexican Ruler Must Tell Fletcher His Knowledge of Zimmermann Letter." (Italics mine)

⁹⁰March 9, 1917, p. 1.

The New York Times editorial suspicion of the Carranza Government and Mexico builds to a climax in April when just before the denouement there appears to be somewhat of a reconsideration. An April 10 editorial entitled "The Mexican Threat" shows absolutely no effort to see things from any other than the point of view of the United States. There is even an air of condescension regarding Mexico's ungratefulness. Its suspicions are founded upon Carranza's silence and triggered by the gathering of both government and Villa troops near the border. It even goes so far as to make known it is expecting the first trouble from Germany to come from the Mexican border.⁹¹ A later editorial reveals a possible reason for this loss of sympathy toward Carranza and Mexico. The idea of Mexico remaining neutral when most of Latin American countries have shown themselves to favor the United States against Germany is incomprehensible to the New York Times editors. They react as though to be neutral in this war is to be against all that is good.⁹² They indicate that they think Mexico will revise its position, but in the meantime they show no sympathy for or understanding of Carranza. They refer to him as the "most whimsical of modern statesmen" and ridicule his stance of neutrality as a "holier-than-thou" position.⁹³

⁹¹P. 12.

⁹²Perhaps a biblical reference used by Senator Lewis and appearing in the Chicago Tribune, April 23, 1917, p. 5, most aptly captures the spirit of the times: "Those who are not with us are against us."

⁹³April 17, 1917, p. 10.

An April 18 editorial, "We Must Watch Mexico," marks the climax of the New York Times dissatisfaction with the "dubious attitude of the Carranza Government."⁹⁴ It points out that United States acceptance of the new Mexican Ambassador does not mean all is well between the United States and Mexico. It mentions that even the Washington Post who has long been friendly to Mexico is now giving a warning word to Mexico. In a tone somewhat remindful of that which has often characterized the Chicago Tribune, it reproaches Mexico and comes closer than at any other time to criticising Wilson's Mexican policy when it says: "The Mexicans cannot understand kindness and tolerance. They attribute them to weakness and cowardice."⁹⁵

The tone of the April 20 editorial in the New York Times—perhaps anticipating the break in the news of April 27 that begins to lessen United States suspicions of Mexico—is somewhat different from that earlier in the month. Its beginning at least is far more reasonable and conciliatory. It mentions the sparsity in news from Mexico and notes that most of the "alarms" from Mexico have no authentic basis. However, it does not go so far as to retract its suspicions of Mexico which it says it will not do until there is proof that there is no ground for them. (Mexico is still guilty until proven innocent!) And the New York Times still maintains its position for the arms embargo even though it realizes that this is a real sore spot with Mexico.⁹⁶

⁹⁴P. 12.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶April 25, 1917, p. 12.

Both the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune give increased coverage in April to Germans going into Mexico and German activity therein. However, the focus of the danger is not always the same in the two papers. The thrust of the New York Times concern is against Carranza and his government directly; however, in the Chicago Tribune there does not appear to be this kind of direct attack but rather a showing of the dangers threatening Carranza's power. Much attention is given in the Chicago Tribune to Villa and other rebel activity. Carranza is not shown as selling out or succumbing to German influence but important men under him such as Obregón are. Emphasis is given to rumors of revolt by Obregón and generals supporting him such as Murguía who is in command of 5,000 troops near the United States border. Both Obregón and the northern generals are said to be getting "German financial and moral backing."⁹⁷

The April coverage of the Baltimore Sun is friendlier to Carranza's Mexico than either the New York Times or the Chicago Tribune. Although its news columns do include information on the German-Mexican danger in Mexico, the Baltimore Sun appears to continue to trust the Mexican government. It continues to express its confidence in Carranza to keep Mexico neutral; its only reservation is to mention the possibility that Carranza could have too much trouble from rebels.⁹⁸ Some doubts are expressed about Villa and his possible relations with Germans, although within its total coverage such suspicions are also denied. Long before

⁹⁷April 16, 1917, p. 5; April 12, 1917, p. 3.

⁹⁸April 11, 1917, p. 1.

either the New York Times or the Chicago Tribune begins to take a more relaxed and confident attitude toward Mexico, the Baltimore Sun reports Mexican sentiment turning against Germany and toward the United States.⁹⁹ Whereas the New York Times hints that such action by Mexico would be in line with a pro-German position,¹⁰⁰ the Baltimore Sun points out that the Mexican government takeover of the British-owned national railway between Vera Cruz and Mexico City shows no evidence of "any German influence behind the act or any success for the efforts of German agents working to secure the support of the Mexican government."¹⁰¹ Thus, when on April 27 Mexico begins to manifest her neutrality by the announcement that Germans will be arrested if they meet near the border, the Baltimore Sun is able to say with some truth at least for itself that Mexico has never really been suspected, only watched because of known German efforts.¹⁰²

Although in April the New York Times gives extensive coverage to facts and suspicions of German intrigue in Mexico, it also contains denials and articles that attempt to dispel these false fears. As in some of the periodicals there is an attempt to separate fact from fiction by logic and an analysis of German methods to see what factors in Mexico are on their side in 1917. Writing during a potentially

⁹⁹April 7, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁰⁰April 14, 1917, p. 6.

¹⁰¹April 11, 1917, p. 1.

¹⁰²P. 3.

explosive situation caused by American fears of Mexican troops gathering near the border supposedly in pursuit of Villa forces, the correspondent of the New York Times in San Antonio attempts to prevent a United States invasion of Mexico by stripping the rumors of some of their fearful bases:

The average rumor is seemingly based upon the supposition that the present government of Mexico is in the hands of a group of uneducated men, who are all antagonistic to the United States. It must be admitted that the present administration is composed of men who have triumphed after several years of revolution, in which they have been aided by the United States, and that the majority of these men in power are men who have lived in the United States, and who are thoroughly familiar with the American people, their spirit, and resources.¹⁰³

The New York Times also quotes extensively from an executive of the American Mission Board, G. B. Winton, who had spent much of thirty years in Mexico and just returned from a ten-week stay. Winton attempts to correct the impression that there is a large amount of German influence in Mexico. Drawing on the authority of his language ability to even detect the German "brogue" in Spanish and his personal knowledge of Mexico, he denies that there is a German rush across the border, that there is any great amount of anti-American sentiment, or that there is any pro-German sentiment. "'It is surprising,' he said, 'how few traces you see down there of the things you hear about here.'" He advises that what Mexicans want is just to be let alone to attend

¹⁰³April 5, 1917, p. 12.

to their own internal problems: "They have no time for foreign complications unless such complications are forced upon them."¹⁰⁴

A Sunday feature article in the April 22 issue of the New York Times both denies the truth of some of the New York Times factual coverage and takes several positions directly opposite to those of its latest editorial comment. Its headlines advise: "American Tact Can Thwart Germans in Mexico: Care in Dealing with Mexican Government May Lead It to Expel German Plotters and Be Friendly to Us in Present Crisis."¹⁰⁵ Although praising Wilson's policies as putting people above vested interests, Mary Austin criticizes the United States embargo which she sees as handicapping Carranza and helping German propaganda.¹⁰⁶ She attempts to dispel the "German-Japanese bogey" by separating the real nature of German influence from the fiction and showing why it is economically impossible for Carranza to root out all Germans. Showing a real understanding of Mexico's dreams and their relations to the present world situation, she argues optimistically that Mexican hatred for Germany is even greater than its distrust of the United States. She expresses confidence in Mexico's clear vision to see that it is in her own interest not to consort with Germans. However, she does caution the United States against blinding Mexico

¹⁰⁴April 13, 1917, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵Mary Austin, sec. 6, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

"with the dust of our fumbling manoeuvres."¹⁰⁷

Strain in United States relations with Mexico reaches a peak in April with the concern over Mexican troops near the border, increased uncertainty of the extent of German influence over Carranza or his subordinates, and fear of an oil embargo or other measures against property that would be disastrous to the allied war effort. The timing and the sternness of the statements of Wilson upon receiving the new Mexican Ambassador suggest the interrelationship of the United States response to the German danger in Mexico and the provisions of the Mexican Constitution affecting foreign property rights. At the height of United States concern over German influence in Mexico, Wilson's reply to the friendly words of the Mexican Ambassador entails a sternly spoken stress on the safety of American citizens and their property. He indicates that he is glad to see a constitutional government in Mexico but will be happy when there is convincing evidence of the protection of American and other foreigners and their property.¹⁰⁸

The New York Times hails the April 27 Mexican announcement that Germans will be arrested if they amass near the border as the first "practical manifestation of Mexico's neutrality."¹⁰⁹ After this

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 3. Statements of Luis Cabrera quoted by Provost in the May issue of The Pan-American Magazine, p. 36, support such a view. Cabrera is critical of the American public not being given more information that would insure their understanding that Mexico realizes a solid American continent is in her interest.

¹⁰⁸New York Times, April 18, 1917, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹April 27, 1917, p. 1.

announcement, press coverage of Mexican news begins to create a quite different picture. Where there were doubts and criticism of Carranza, there now is a picture of him as our friend.¹¹⁰ Where there had been accusations of German influence with regard to the possibility of new Mexican oil taxes, there now is a report that the State Department sees it as only a necessary measure by Mexico to get needed revenue.¹¹¹ In May the New York Times refers to the Mexican Constitution as the "most liberal and advanced ever attempted."¹¹² Only the month before, it had been shown through the eyes of refugees who thought it illegal.¹¹³ Obregón, who had been more frequently labeled pro-German than anyone else near Carranza, now is said to be "only pro-Mexican" and his character is vindicated by the revelation that he "could not be bought."¹¹⁴

Mexican restriction of German activities near the border is only the first of many actions that show her in fact to be a "benevolent neutral" although she chooses to term her course that of "strict neutrality." In June and July there is even discussion of the possibility of Mexico entering the war as an ally. However, both the New York Times and the Baltimore Sun reveal that there is no United States pressure for such a Mexican move. In fact, the United States would prefer that Mexico remain the benevolent neutral where the Allies have

¹¹⁰New York Times, May, 1917, passim.

¹¹¹Baltimore Sun, April 27, 1917, p. 3.

¹¹²May 2, 1917, p. 13.

¹¹³April 15, 1917, p. 22.

¹¹⁴New York Times, April 27, 1917, p. 11.

the advantages but not the liabilities incurred with an alliance. Concern is expressed that having Mexico as an ally during the war might be a hindrance to taking the stringent steps that might be necessary to handle grievances with Mexico after the war.¹¹⁵

Now that Mexico is shown to be our friend in this international conflict there is a tendency for that prevailing fact to affect United States response to all Mexican events. There continues to be some coverage of wireless plots and German spies in Mexico because of their possible danger to Mexican oil, but there is no more implicating of the Mexican government. Even the new export taxes on oil put into effect July 10 after great effort by the United States to change them is handled quietly and reasonably by both the State Department and the press.¹¹⁶

This general change in the tone of the daily press coverage of Mexican events after April 27 does not mean that all newspapers give the same interpretation to Mexico's actions. Like the New York Times and the Baltimore Sun, the Chicago Tribune is confident that the United States can now count on Mexico to help the allies as a neutral. However, the editorials of the Chicago Tribune show Carranza as having been bought. Attributing Carranza's friendship to financial motives, the editorial comment of the Chicago Tribune infers that Carranza may

¹¹⁵New York Times, July 11, 1917, p. 1; Baltimore Sun, July 11, 1917, p. 2.

¹¹⁶New York Times, July 7, 1917, p. 7; July 11, 1917, p. 1; July 31, 1917, p. 3.

love Germany, but he cannot get money from Germany now like he can the United States.¹¹⁷

Newspaper coverage of all Mexican events decreases sharply as the strained relations between Mexico and the United States over Mexico's position in the war ease. There continues to be some factual reporting and a few articles on economic and social changes in Mexico; however, in absolute terms there is even less coverage of significant change in Mexico after the major scare of the Mexican government being influenced by Germany is over than in the months prior to it.

Arguments for and Against Intervention

Reaction to events in Mexico in 1917 vary from sympathy to belligerency. A multitude of arguments both for and against intervention are brought out by the the press's emphasis on Mexico's lack of law and order, the danger of the new Constitution to the rights of American citizens and their property in Mexico, and the fear of German influence. Of especial interest is the fact that those arguing against military intervention in Mexico are not necessarily those sympathetic to the Mexican Revolution; reasons of realism led some to the conclusion that United States objectives in Mexico could not effectively be gained in this manner.

Intervention into Mexican affairs could take many forms. In addition to the more obvious military intervention, other frequently debated methods of influencing Mexican internal affairs are the use of a diplomatic state of nonrecognition and a United States embargo.

¹¹⁷Editorial, May 28, 1917, p. 8.

Withholding recognition could help keep an already tottering Mexican government in extended limbo, whereas United States recognition could buttress it both economically and politically. Even more consequential during times of Mexican revolution was the use of an embargo on munitions: the ability to buy arms from the United States by a Mexican government, by Mexican rebels, or by neither could be the determining factor in the rise or fall of a Mexican government.

The New York Times tends to support Wilson's policies with regard to recognition, the use of the embargo, and the withdrawal of Pershing. After it is a fait accompli, the New York Times shows the wisdom of restoring the normal diplomatic channels and gives favorable coverage to the sending of Ambassador Fletcher. Throughout the first half of 1917 its editorials take a very definite position in support of the embargo on munitions to Mexico; however, when Wilson considers removing it in July, the New York Times does express trust in his and Fletcher's judgment.¹¹⁸

The January news coverage and editorial columns of the New York Times give numerous reasons for the withdrawal of Pershing's troops. However, the tenor of their arguments for withdrawal, although leading to the same conclusions for United States policy as Wilson's thinking, has a somewhat more isolationist ring. The New York Times emphasizes the changed internal situation in Mexico with Carranza now having more

¹¹⁸July 22, 1917, sec. 2, p. 2.

opposition than just Villa.¹¹⁹ It also stresses the high expense of the expedition, and the fact that "high army officials" think that the United States would be in a stronger strategic position on the American side of the border.¹²⁰ A January 14 editorial argues that the withdrawal of United States troops should not depend on any action of Carranza,¹²¹ but on whether or not they are serving a purpose for the United States.¹²² That in advocating United States withdrawal the New York Times was thinking realistically of American interests, not of any boost such action might give Carranza in Mexican opinion, is suggested by its January news columns and clearly indicated in its editorials:

Carranza's rule in Mexico, in short, is not established. He and his immediate following are likely to disappear from Mexico and contemporary history before long, but even if they overcome the obstacles in their way and establish a Government it is just as well to let them work out their own salvation.¹²³

However, the New York Times does draw the line on a noninterference

¹¹⁹Editorial, January 1, 1917, p. 8.

¹²⁰January 3, 1917, p. 1.

¹²¹It appeared that Carranza was not going to sign the Atlantic City Protocol which had been arrived at by a United States-Mexican Commission to provide for the withdrawal of United States troops from Mexico. The offensive measure within it that made it political suicide for Carranza to sign was a provision that the United States could send troops again into Mexico under certain conditions. How it looked from Carranza's viewpoint is brought out in the news columns of the New York Times but not in the Chicago Tribune.

¹²²Sec. 7, p. 2. The news columns also note the growing sentiment in official circles for the withdrawal of Pershing even without the agreement being signed.

¹²³January 14, 1917, p. 2.

policy when it comes to Mexico not paying her bills; here it sees the necessity of the United States playing a part in Mexican affairs.¹²⁴

Others who agree with the withdrawal of Pershing's troops frequently do so with quite different arguments. They point out the uselessness of the troops staying in Mexico, criticizing their inefficiencies but indicating that the real cause of their failure is Wilson's hamstringing their military movements against Villa.¹²⁵ The Chicago Tribune shows the Pershing withdrawal as Wilson's failure but not as a national failure except in so much as it shows the necessity of preparation for war. It introduces the troop withdrawal as the "U.S. TO LEAVE VILLA CAPTURE TO CARRANZA," thereby helping to cushion any ring of failure to the American ear.¹²⁶ Some members of the daily press are led neither by sympathy with Mexico or by forces of realism to concur with the troop withdrawal; they see it as a loss of United States honor, an insult to the flag, and an intervention that will have to be repeated later by either the United States or European powers after the war.¹²⁷ The Detroit Free Press makes the accusation that the intervention even from the beginning was just a political trick of

¹²⁴Ibid.

¹²⁵Marvin, The World's Work, XXXIII, 300; "The End of a Chapter," The Outlook, CXV (February 7, 1917), 218; Chicago Tribune, January 4, 1917, p. 1; editorial, Chicago Tribune, January 15, 1917, p. 6.

¹²⁶January 4, 1917, p. 1.

¹²⁷Florida Times-Union quoted in "The Retreat of Our Ten Thousand," The Literary Digest, LIV (February 3, 1917), 234; Detroit Free Press, January 1, 1917, p. 1.

Wilson. It indicates that Wilson was pressured into some kind of immediate action by the public reaction to the Columbus raid in order to win the elections.¹²⁸

Arguments for intervention in 1917 do not center around the Pershing expedition. The Pershing expedition in the eyes of those who argue for a policy of military intervention in Mexico was at best only a half-way measure. The Chicago Tribune entitles an editorial on the withdrawal of Pershing "The End of a Chapter—Not of the Book."¹²⁹ During the early months of 1917 the editorials of the Chicago Tribune maintain a steady stream of satirical comment on the humanitarian motives of Wilson's Mexican policy. They plead for a realistic change in that policy to make it effective like the United States policy of that time in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and other Caribbean countries.¹³⁰ The Chicago Tribune has many different approaches to its promotion of a more interventionist policy for Mexico: it argues in the name of realism, in the name of United States national security, in the name of morality and even in the name of the safety and prosperity of the Mexican people. It compares Mexico to Cuba where the "American government, at the proper time, put a stop to practices which were threatening American security and sense of decency," and

¹²⁸January 2, 1917, p. 4.

¹²⁹January 23, 1917, p. 6.

¹³⁰Ibid.; January 24, 1917, p. 6; January 30, 1917, p. 8; February 10, 1917, p. 6; February 15, 1917, p. 4; February 27, 1917, p. 6; March 2, 1917, p. 6; March 8, 1917, p. 4; March 17, 1917, p. 13; March 29, 1917, p. 6.

shows not only American properties less secure in Mexico but the Mexicans in a worse situation:

What Mexico wants is a chance for its citizens to live. Mr. Wilson has made their bad case worse. He has done so by thinking merely of them. His dogma was dramatic and fine. It reached out to help a suffering people. It has pushed them further under. It was our president's business to administer the affairs of this nation with regard to Mexico so that the interests of American citizens would be served. If Mr. Wilson had done that he would have served the Mexicans.

If American lives and properties were safe everywhere in Mexico—as they easily might be under a pragmatic American administration—a great deal of the burden would be lifted off the Mexican people. They would find security where the American interests found security. Order would be the rule of the land. Misrule is now its rule.¹³¹

It indicates that in reality our Cuban policy is the humane one: In Cuba the United States does not allow "bullets" to take the place of ballots; thus, the Cubans are learning.¹³²

The Chicago Tribune tends to portray Mexico as a slum that is in need of being cleaned up. It attempts to both challenge and shame the United States for not protecting itself and helping its neighbor. It charges that "the American vision evidently cannot be focused upon things close at home. American opinion regards Mexico as a slum and ignores it as such, ignoring consequently all the diseases which may emerge from a slum."¹³³ Calls for intervention to clean up Mexico are heightened by American anxiety that Germany may use the Mexican situation to its advantage. With the United States headed for

¹³¹Editorial, January 24, 1917, p. 6.

¹³²Editorial, February, 15, 1917, p. 4.

¹³³Editorial, March 17, 1917, p. 6.

involvement in the war against Germany, Mexico is obviously "our exposed flank."¹³⁴ In a threatening tone the Chicago Tribune continues to point out that "we are not through with Mexico."¹³⁵ In May when Mexico appears to be attempting to get a loan from the United States, its editors stress what the nature of United States policy must be:

Force of a different kind must stand behind money. If Americans acquire new property rights in Mexico, if American loans be made, if American money goes in, this peaceful invasion of productive force must be respected, and if it is not respected, respect must be commanded for it by a different kind of force, expressed in terms of regiments.¹³⁶

Within the comments of the Chicago Tribune one can find at least in germinal form most of the major arguments of other interventionists; however, they are not always bared of their cloak of reason, as in some more emotional sources. Through a narrative one author reveals two Americans, who are somewhat representative of the major American elements in Mexico, that go "Anglo-Saxon blind" when they cross the border.¹³⁷ She allows their own conversations to expose their Anglo-Saxon racist views; their expressions reflect the concepts common to many nineteenth century Americans who interpreted the ideas of Darwin and Spencer to mean the "survival of the fittest." They both argue for United States intervention, one speaking in economic terms and the other as a missionary seeing the necessity of changing the whole thought structure

¹³⁴Editorial, February 10, 1917, p. 6.

¹³⁵February 27, 1917, p. 6.

¹³⁶May 28, 1917, p. 8.

¹³⁷Katharine Holland Brown, "On a Brief Text from Isaiah," Scribner's Magazine, LXI (February, 1917), 137.

of Mexico.¹³⁸ Even among United States Congressmen there are those calling for "immediate American occupation of Mexico."¹³⁹ Senator Beveridge points out that holding Mexico is in the strategic interest of United States defense. He indicates that the United States should take action now while Mexico cannot get munitions; such an opportune time may never come again. He also argues that a relationship with Mexico like that with Cuba under the Platt Amendment would be good for Mexico, and after all the bloodshed, Mexicans would welcome it.¹⁴⁰

In 1917, periodical arguments against forceful intervention are more numerous than those for it.¹⁴¹ Both impassioned appeals and rational analyses call for the United States to treat revolutionary Mexico with tolerance and patience, to attempt to cooperate with her rather than apply force. Arguments range from an emotional portrayal of the Mexican Revolution as a social revolution necessary to get Mexico out of its medieval society¹⁴² to the scholarly use of geographical facts to show why the costs of United States intervention in northern Mexico is bound to be completely out of proportion to

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹"What to Do About Mexico," The American Review of Reviews, LV (June, 1917), 644-45 quoting Senator Albert J. Beveridge, Colliers, May 19, 1917.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹All articles that do argue for intervention or even appear to be anti-Mexican in tone appear in periodicals between February and July. According to my classification of articles in 1917, after July ~~there~~ are no calls for intervention.

¹⁴²Jordan, The Unpopular Review, VIII, 157.

United States benefits.¹⁴³ Many commentators applaud Wilson for his patience with Mexico especially since there has been pressure on him to abandon his "watchful waiting" policy.¹⁴⁴ Some even go so far as to favor the lifting of the embargo on arms to the Carranza government. They point out that the embargo continues to be a source of irritation in United States-Mexican relations and is being exploited by the German propaganda.¹⁴⁵

Evaluations and Conclusions

United States newspaper and periodical coverage of events in Mexico in 1917 includes a variety of tones and viewpoints. Articles are frequently marked by their authors' attempt to be factual, to be realistic, or to create either a favorable or unfavorable view of Mexico and the Mexican people. There are certain similarities that can be noted in the arguments of those who are sympathetic to Mexico and her revolution and likewise in the arguments of those who are antagonistic. And even some generalizations can be made about the viewpoint usually found within certain magazines.

¹⁴³D. T. MacDougal, "Mexico, The Frontier Region of: Notes to Accompany a Map of the Frontier," The Geographical Review, III (January, 1917), 25.

¹⁴⁴"The Present State of Mexico," The American Review of Reviews, LVI (September, 1917), 280; Lawrence, The Independent, XCI, 127; Wallace, Overland Monthly, LXX, 433.

¹⁴⁵"Trusting Mexico with Firearms," The Literary Digest, LV (August 4, 1917), 26; "German Efforts in Mexico," The World's Work, XXXV, 212. In the daily press Mary Austin had taken a position against the embargo as early as April 22 in her feature article in the New York Times, sec. 6, p. 2.

Those who are sympathetic to Mexico and her revolutionary changes tend to highlight her constructive efforts in the areas of education and labor reform and to draw on comparisons with other times and places in order to create adequate perspective for viewing the disagreeable aspects of revolution. They tend to show what is happening in Mexico as similar to the democratic reform already present in the United States and in accordance with those desired by United States Progressives but perhaps not yet enacted. They lend perspective and purpose to the "unjust" and "undiscriminating" aspects of the Revolution, by pointing to other revolutionary struggles that have been approved of by Americans such as the American Revolution and the contemporary world war for democracy against oligarchy.¹⁴⁶ Similarly they point to the past of Mexico, the hardships and injustices her people have suffered, and the present constructive action in contrast to the many years of violence and turmoil. They show her current elections in context with what has been, and in general attempt to evaluate events in Mexico in terms of their meaning to the Mexican

¹⁴⁶Jordan, The Unpopular Review, VIII, 160.

people, not just how they will affect United States interests in Mexico.¹⁴⁷

One of the striking aspects of many of the pro-Mexican articles is the naïvete shown by the reports of some American observers and writers. In direct opposition to the extreme black portrayal of Mexico as a land of chaos and violence that marks the daily news for so many years and continues into 1917, some liberals portray Mexico's education and labor reforms as though they are the United States Progressive dream come true. In selection of topics, descriptive terminology, and most of all the spirit of the article, one can frequently see the impact an author's Progressive framework has on his relation of a Mexican event. Such a frame of reference makes Mexican events appear deceptively simple and lends itself to far too roseate a view of Mexico's present and future.

Especially in articles appearing in The Survey, changes taking place in Mexican education and the possible educational projects

¹⁴⁷Periodicals whose total coverage of Mexican events in 1917 tend to be sympathetic to the Mexican revolution include The Bellman, Overland Monthly, Pan-American Magazine, The Survey, The Unpopular Review, and in a more mixed, realistic way The New Republic. The Political Science Quarterly also contributes many substantial sympathetic arguments but maintains a realistic tone accompanied by mixed conclusions. (The single articles in each of The Investment Weekly and The Yale Review are pro-Mexican but not pro-Revolution.) Important sympathetic arguments of a liberal variety are provided by The Outlook and The Independent; however, their total coverage of Mexican events does include other points of view. Other periodical sources of pro-Mexican information include The American Review of Reviews and The Literary Digest which by the nature of their design contain a variety of viewpoints. Among the daily press, the news columns of the New York Times and the Baltimore Sun at least during some portions of 1917 come nearest to giving sufficient perspective to lend themselves to a sympathetic position regarding the Mexican social revolution; they also contain some specific articles with a sympathetic viewpoint.

supported by groups of Americans are seen far too much as a panacea to Mexico's problems, which are many and complex.¹⁴⁸ Similarly, some of the coverage of the daily press reveals the naive optimism of those who see American aid to Mexican educational efforts as a way of achieving Mexican salvation as well as securing United States-Mexican friendly relations.

Not all the naivete displayed by Americans is from liberals seeing Mexican events through Progressive-colored glasses. There are also instances where more conservative, or business oriented commentators on the Mexican scene show their concepts of Mexican change to be just as naive and superficial. Although both Hamilton Reid's article in the July 21, 1917, issue of The Investment Weekly and John Barrett's in the January issue of The Yale Review are able to marshal facts to support their encouraging picture of Mexico as a good place for investment, they also do a lot of wishful thinking. Reid invites investment in Mexican oil by citing statistics that show the high dividends in the past and commenting on the large oil reserves, the less expensive developing in Mexico because of drilling in the sand, and the cheaper labor. He points to the bright future for investment since the political situation will be stabler and notes that even in the worst political times oil has not been hurt too much because of the taxes it pays.¹⁴⁹ None of the legal, or social and

¹⁴⁸"Free, Secular Schools for Mexico," XXXVII (January 20, 1917), 460-61; "Yucatan Schools Seek Our Help," XXXVII (March 10, 1917), 659-60.

¹⁴⁹"Mexican Oil Fields: Enormous Reserves of This Territory—Present Profits and Production—New Company in Field," XIX, 5.

economic changes in Mexico are mentioned or appear to dent Reid's optimism. The total effect of Barrett's article, although it is a mixture with his showing good will toward Mexico and in places some awareness of the new day in Mexico, is to make one feel that the political and economic chaos of the last seven years was only a temporary interruption between the good times of Diaz and the potential of Mexico's future as a place for American investment. He points out the reciprocal needs of the United States and Mexico that favor cooperation: Mexico needs American capital to develop herself; and for the United States, Mexico would be an excellent place for investment and trade. However, making one dubious of whether Barrett is always seeing the realities of the Mexican situation is his consistent denial that Mexican laborers wanted to take part in the Mexican Revolution, his insistence on their mechanical bent and excellence as workmen, his belief that many of the talented middle class will be returning to Mexico, and especially such naive statements about Mexico as "there is no anti-American feeling other than that spirit of rivalry and competition which may exist between any two friendly nations."¹⁵⁰

Among those Americans who are sympathetic to the Mexican Revolution, the emphasis is on what is now being given to the Mexican people rather than on what is being taken from non-Mexicans. If redistribution of the land is mentioned in their articles, there is the tendency for them to mention such positive things as it being possible for the

¹⁵⁰VI, 320.

Mexican government to give land to its landless peons without expropriations from individual land owners.¹⁵¹ Or, they may point to Yucatan as an actual example of redistribution of the land which has given each family head 40 acres "without confiscation."¹⁵²

Similarly, in their comments on the Mexican Constitution rather than placing it within a framework of violation of foreign property rights, they show it as an effort to place Mexicans and foreigners in positions of equality or as stated by Luis Cabrera, "to raise the Mexican citizen to the plane of the foreigners in Mexico."¹⁵³ In commenting on the Constitution's restrictions on foreigners, as well as other events in Mexico, they tend to give at least some attention to the reasons for their being, according to the Mexican viewpoint. For instance, in discussing the restrictions against foreign ownership of land in border areas, one author notes the rather reasonable fear that especially there "they might furnish excuse for foreign intervention."¹⁵⁴

Among Americans in 1917 that are antagonistic to the Mexican Revolution, there are far less arguments directly calling for intervention than there are pictures of Mexico in such dire condition as to make United States intervention likely or desirable. The Mexican people and their government leaders are demeaned and Mexico's partici-

¹⁵¹Chamberlain, Political Science Quarterly, XXXII, 383.

¹⁵²"Yucatan Schools Seek Our Help," The Survey, XXXVII, 659-60.

¹⁵³Constantine, The Outlook, CXV, 455.

¹⁵⁴Henry Bruère, "Mexico Progresses," The New Republic, XII (October 6, 1917), 263-64.

pation in world affairs is ridiculed. In tones reminiscent of some earlier portrayals of the American Negro, Mexicans are shown as lazy, irresponsible, gullible, and in short, capable of development only within a paternalistic system.¹⁵⁵ Even in 1917 there is an occasional use of barbaric and pagan selections from Mexican history to indicate racial degeneracy.¹⁵⁶ Some commentators, in an effort to show that the Mexican Revolution was not a real people's revolution in a democratic sense, even rob them of the honor and valor of having fought for a cause that had real meaning to them. One American writer demeans the motives of the Mexican masses with such comments as the following:

They can be stirred to fight when their hates are appealed to, or when fighting earns more money and leisure than work. They may be impressed by a glib tongue, an appeal to traditional dislike, or a promise of future prosperity with, of course, less labour involved; so they fight in the rank and file of revolutions for pay, with the additional incentive of enthusiasm for some individual leader, or for fictitious ideals they do not quite understand. They never command. They do not agitate. They only fight and die. As a rule they do not want the land; but it is always promised to them as a pledge of plenty¹⁵⁷

Mexican revolutionary leaders are frequently shown as "half butcher and half bandit"¹⁵⁸ and even those that have succeeded in becoming the de facto government are granted little dignity or qualities of character. The daily press frequently subjects the

¹⁵⁵Joubert, Harper's Magazine, CXXXV, 269, 274, 276.

¹⁵⁶Francis C. Kelley, "Mexico: Yesterday, To-day, and Tomorrow," The Dublin Review, CLXI (July, 1917), 83-85. Kelley is an American Bishop in the Catholic Church whose writings are of some importance in the 1926 Mexican Church-State conflict.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁵⁸Graham, The English Review, XXV, 510.

characters of Carranza and important members of his cabinet to the axe, and perhaps what is worse, their comments are often marked by a tinge of Anglo-Saxon condescension. Mexico's past is used against her to indicate what are likely dangers for the present. The Mexican government is characterized as having been "notoriously corrupt, notoriously venal in demanding bribes of corporations, notoriously without technical training, and notoriously hostile to foreign interests."¹⁵⁹ Thus, in the portrayal of those antagonistic to the Mexican revolutionary changes, Mexico is chaotic and violent, a danger to the United States because of its inability to maintain law and order, and likely to stay this way because of the ineptness of its people and the tendency of its government toward demoralization and corruption unless the policeman of this hemisphere does something about it.¹⁶⁰

Another form of degradation to which Mexico's image was subjected by United States nationalists at a time when her revolutionary government was especially sensitive in this area of nationhood was the ridicule of her Constitution and her president's efforts in world

¹⁵⁹Usher, North American Review, CCV, 401.

¹⁶⁰Articles marked by their antagonistic view of the Mexican Revolution come from a variety of periodical sources. The total coverage in 1917 of Mexican events by Scribner's Magazine, North American Review, American Political Science Review, and The Dublin Review is antagonistic, but in each of these periodicals there is only one article involved. Other articles with an anti-Mexican viewpoint can be found in the mixed coverage of Harper's Magazine, The Outlook, The Literary Digest, and The American Review of Reviews. A unique attack of the religious intolerance of the Calles government from a liberal viewpoint appears in The Independent. The Chicago Tribune and the sampling from the Detroit Free Press, especially in their editorial comments, provide a highly nationalistic coverage of United States-Mexican affairs and an evaluation of events in Mexico in terms of their effects on American citizens.

affairs. The Chicago Tribune makes fun of Mexico's attempted leadership of the continent to keep it out of the European war. A complete lack of respect for Mexico or other nations like her is shown by the satirical comment of an editorial entitled "Mexican Slum Leadership."¹⁶¹

Not all the commentary on Mexican events is marked by American idealism projected into the Mexican Revolution or by excessive American nationalism. Many articles attempt to be just factual reports on current events or on a specialized area of interest. Others including some substantial analysis are especially significant because they contain a mixture of facts and viewpoints caused by the author's efforts to be realistic regardless of his own personal point of view.¹⁶² And some of those who reveal themselves in favor of Mexican reform and in general optimistic about her future, are nevertheless realistically aware of some of the difficulties Mexico faces.

At the same time that there are those who advocate Mexico's problems being solved with a humanitarian intervention by the United States in sending doctors, nurses, and teachers to Mexico,¹⁶³ there are also those who even in the early twentieth century are acutely aware of the complications involved in one country's aid to another. The

¹⁶¹Chicago Tribune, March 20, 1917, p. 8.

¹⁶²The total coverage of The World's Work is distinctive for its display of enlightened realism. The Geographical Review, Current Opinion, The Nation, The English Review, The Missionary Review of the World and individual articles in The Outlook, The Survey, The Literary Digest, and The American Review of Reviews also are characterized by a realistic approach. Some of the periodicals already mentioned among those favorable to the Mexican Revolution also contain articles with portions that redound with this quality.

¹⁶³Brown, Scribner's Magazine, LXI, 146-48.

awareness of Mexican sensitivity by some, as well as perhaps general traits of their own character, leads them to stress the reciprocal needs of the United States for Mexican help. They emphasize that when it comes to education we both can learn from each other.¹⁶⁴ Other Americans point out Mexican fears of United States aid:

Mexico distrusts the United States even in its most benevolent—I should say, especially when benevolent—stage, because she is afraid that by associating with us too much she might grow to be somewhat like us. For Mexico, out of her half-way House, has had a vision of freedom and reform such as the American does not so much as talk of, unless it might be in his sleep¹⁶⁵

If there remain any doubts about the difficulty inherent in United States groups aiding Mexico, the New York Times printing of the following satirical letter to the editor makes clear the negative response at least among some Mexicans: "The people of Mexico are more inclined to be afraid of the teachings and the 'educational agents' of the United States than of its soldiers." He continues by asking what could the United States teach other than the making of dollars, "and what but slavery could you give to our lower classes, when the civilization of this country has not yet conceded that a person who is not strictly white is not human."¹⁶⁶

In considering the total United States 1917 periodical coverage of Mexican events and a selection of major newspaper coverage, one is surprised that there are not more flagrantly anti-Mexican articles.

¹⁶⁴Baltimore Sun, February 21, 1917, p. 3; "Through the School Door into Mexico," The Survey, XXXVII, 605.

¹⁶⁵Austin, New York Times, April 22, 1917, sec. 6, p. 3.

¹⁶⁶February 23, 1917, p. 10.

Of course, those that do give expression to anti-Mexican bias make such vivid impressions on the reader through the use of personal narrative and sensational analogies that perhaps their influence in 1917 was out of proportion to their number. One is also surprised by the existence of substantial articles on Mexican economic and social change—even occasionally in the daily press—and the amount of enlightened commentary and analysis.¹⁶⁷ Of course, this surprise is begotten not by their great number, but by their existence at all after one has been led to expect a quite barren press coverage by those who wrote in 1917 that "public opinion about all Latin America is founded on the reports of a few miners and planters who have interests there, a few newspaper men paid to report only what they see, a few magazine writers carefully warned to avoid being either profound or original, not one in seven of whom speak the Latin tongue."¹⁶⁸

Except for a few character assassinations, emotional labels are not used very often in 1917. The word "socialism" is used occasionally but not always with high-pitched emotional connotations. In what appears to be merely an effort to convey the flavor of what is being

¹⁶⁷Among the articles of the daily press exceptional for their substantial coverage are those already mentioned by Mary Austin in the March 11 and April 27 issues of the New York Times and one by W. A. Evans in the March 26 issue of the Chicago Tribune. Evans gives extensive coverage to economic and social reforms in Sonora using concrete description to make the changes that are taking place real to the American reader. His tone is a combination of optimism and pessimism: optimism about the change taking place in Sonora but pessimism about some other parts of Mexico where "the new constitution is a jumble of empty words."

¹⁶⁸Austin, New York Times, March 11, 1917, sec. 7, p. 2.

done in some parts of Mexico, one author draws on the descriptive word "socialism." He states that "somewhere somebody has read the tenets of socialism and attempted to adapt them to Mexican conditions"; however, he reasons that the chances for their success in Mexico are slim.¹⁶⁹ There is some defense of Mexico by those sympathizing with the Mexican Revolution against any such charge of socialism. They imply that like the United States, Mexico is only trying to provide laws to allow her to utilize her national wealth and talent rather than have a government of special concessions and privilege.¹⁷⁰

Although the emotional harangue against Mexico and her Revolution is less in 1917 than a reader from the Cold War generation would expect, and even though both the daily press and periodical coverage do include some articles of real substance and enlightened analysis, the overall picture of the news coverage of Mexico in 1917 is one marred by great deficiencies. The biggest deficiency is the general lack of in-depth coverage. The article of substance is the rare exception, not the rule; information on economic and social changes in Mexico is difficult to find and practically non-existent in 1917 once the initial scare regarding the direction of Mexico's future policies is over. The tendency is for articles to skim the surface and really not give Americans much information to understand the diverse Mexico and the complexities of her problems. Although one is greatly impressed by individual efforts of scholarship to make more understandable the

¹⁶⁹Evans, Chicago Tribune, March 26, 1917, p. 10.

¹⁷⁰Gallant, The American Review of Reviews, LV, 184.

complexities of the Mexican heritage, her geography and population characteristics, and their relations to her present policies and problems, these can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Likewise, one is greatly impressed with the insight into some of the problems that come to dominate the twentieth century shown by an occasional author. However, the mainstay of American journalism in 1917 is not so characterized. In fact, a reader's chance of being exposed to either an article of substance or a far-seeing analysis is slight. The general effect of the coverage of Mexican events by periodicals and newspapers in 1917 both in the selection of subject and their superficial treatment is to give Americans the illusion that they know something about what is going on in Mexico but in reality give them only stereotypes and keep them always dependent upon the evaluations of the news media.

CHAPTER II

1926: U.S. REACTION TO THE MEXICAN LAND AND PETROLEUM LAWS

Introduction

Although many revolutionary concepts, including those affecting United States citizens and their property rights in Mexico, had been included in the Mexican Constitution of 1917, they were not always put into action immediately. In fact, it was not until the much later presidency of Calles, that many portions of the Constitution began to be enforced. One writer, notable for his knowledge and understanding of Mexican affairs, summarily explains this delay as follows:

Carranza was too harassed with the problem of military pacification; Obregon, his successor, was too busy reconciling the various greedy factions and setting in motion reconstructive measures to worry too much about the constitution; only with President Calles has the country entered upon a technically legal administration President Calles has systemically pushed through Congress laws not merely regulating the churches but carrying out almost every clause of the 1917 Constitution—land tenure, petroleum, labor, irrigation, forestry conservation, banking, taxation, rural credits, social insurance, mining, transportation.¹

Since I have chosen to pay particular attention in this analysis to the reaction of the United States to those aspects of the Mexican Revolution affecting property rights, the year 1926 is of central importance. The Land and Petroleum Laws that were proposed by the Mexican Congress in December, 1925, are viewed by the world in 1926 as they await Calles'

Carleton Beals, "Calles is Gaining in Mexico," The Nation, CXXIII (October 6, 1926), 321.

signature and rules of regulation. During the early months of 1926, the State Department's negotiations with Mexico concerning the new Land and Petroleum Laws is a major item in some newspapers. Prior to the middle of February, it by far overshadows all other reports of Mexican affairs, at least in the New York Times; however, after that, it shares the limelight with the more sensationalized reports on religious persecution in Mexico.

Even though the main reason for the choice of 1926 as a year befitting an analysis of United States journalism was to secure information on United States reaction to these new Mexican property laws, it is not always possible after the middle of February to disengage the reaction of Americans to these laws from their reaction to religious events in Mexico, and a number of other emotional issues such as Mexico's "divorce mills," or her border "dens of iniquity."²

Scattered throughout the year there are charges of collusion between church and business; guardians of the public stress the coinciding of interests that results in those interested in the mineral riches of Mexico making the loudest protests against the religious persecution in Mexico.³ Also, an analysis of the Protestant and Catholic reactions

Commercial Appeal (Memphis), February 27, 1926, p. 1; editorial, p. 6.

George A. Miller, The Christian Century, XLIII, 411; Alva W. Taylor, "Why There is Trouble in Mexico," The Christian Century, XLIII (September 9, 1926), 1108; Herbert A. Jump, "Some Adventures of an Amateur Propagandist," The Christian Century, XLIII (November 18, 1926), 1421; "Church and State in Mexico: A British Version," The Living Age, CCCXXX (September 11, 1926), 572.

indicates that there is a correlation between the relative degree to which a religious group in Mexico is hurt by the religious enforcements and their reaction to the economic and political aspects of the revolution including the land and oil laws.

The charge of an organized propaganda effort to influence public opinion is especially significant in 1926 because during this year the sentiments of public opinion appear to be a restraining factor on the State Department's development of a stringent United States policy towards Mexico. A detailed analysis suggests that the treatment of the religious and other emotional issues by the press does serve to fan public opinion. Whereas in January and early February United States intervention is far from being considered or tolerated in reaction to the Land and Petroleum Laws, by the end of the year, it is shown as a serious possibility.

The significance of this fanned public opinion is pointed out by a New York newspaper in an article entitled "MEXICO'S WAR ON CHURCHES STIRS DEMAND U.S. INTERVENE." Americans being aroused by the religious persecution means that for the first time since the "virtually confiscatory" land and oil laws, the administration could intervene in Mexico without having the Democrats use the charge of the killing of American boys to protect capital as a political weapon.⁴ By late November and December, a far more emotional and belligerent tone characterizes many newspaper reports and State Department releases on the land law controversy and Mexican affairs in general. Whereas the

⁴New York Herald Tribune, February 18, 1926, p. 1.

word "Bolshevism" had previously been used largely by religious fanatics—or those who used their cause—the Associated Press carries an article nationwide, November 17, raising the Communist specter in Central America: Mexico is shown to be exporting Communism to Nicaragua and Guatemala and thereby endangering the security of the canal zone.⁵ Within days, newspaper reports reveal a deadlock of the United States-Mexican negotiations over the Land and Petroleum Laws. The United States appears to be taking a hard-line view that makes a break in relations and even intervention seem a likely consequence if Mexico enforces these land and oil laws.⁶ (Owners of mining and oil rights are required to apply for a concession by January 1, 1927.) Even within the contemporary 1926 press there are those who question whether the United States accusation that Mexico is setting up a Bolshevik state in Nicaragua is not just a way to inflame the American people against Mexico so that they will support a "more drastic policy toward Mexico with regard to the land and oil laws."⁷ Thus, other Mexican issues, especially the religious issue which is covered so heavily by both daily press and periodicals in 1926, do assume some importance

⁵The subject of American reaction to Mexican intrigue in Nicaragua and Guatemala is treated only summarily in this analysis of 1926 journalism because most reaction is not revealed until 1927 issues of periodicals.

⁶Cleveland Press, December 1, 1926, p. 8; "Mexico's Move to Confiscate American Property," The Literary Digest, XCI (December 11, 1926), 5.

⁷"Mexican Rage at Washington," The Literary Digest, XCI (December 25, 1926), 13. "Mexico's Hand in Nicaragua," The Literary Digest, XCI (December 4, 1926), 14, reveals the Cleveland Press expressing such suspicions.

in trying to understand the change in the tone and seriousness of United States response to the Land and Petroleum Laws.

A Factual Account of Immediate Response as Revealed in the Daily Press

In contrast to the Chicago Tribune where even in the early months of 1926 there is only an occasional article about the Land and Petroleum Laws, the New York Times gives practically a day-to-day account of the status of the laws and the United States-Mexican diplomacy and propaganda in response to them. As soon as copies of the laws become available in the United States, the New York Times prints the major sections for American readers.⁸ The New York Times includes a variety of viewpoints. Over a period of time one can even see the view of its own editorial comment and the reports from the State Department change. Its discussions and commentaries are sufficiently extensive to show the ambiguities of the Mexican laws, some of the reasons for Mexico's nationalistic "retorts," the circumstances surrounding them that could allow the United States and Mexico to work out a satisfactory agreement, and yet still show the main strands of United States and Mexican arguments that lead to a diplomatic "deadlock" the beginning of February.

From the beginning in 1926 there is an apparent duality in the tone of the administration's statements regarding Mexico's new Land and Petroleum Laws. Both the tones of friendliness and sternness mark United States official responses in January with one sometimes

⁸See appendix.

prevailing over the other. The spirit of this duality is conveyed in the comments of the New York Times on January 12:

The fundamental issue between the two nations since the adoption of Article 27 in the Carranza Constitution of 1917 has been the safeguarding of American property rights in Mexico, especially as against a confiscatory application of its provisions. The feeling of the Coolidge administration toward the Mexican people is one of entire friendliness. It deeply regrets the necessity for protesting against the new petroleum and land laws, and did so only because they are construed as retroactive and gravely injurious to legitimate American interests in Mexico.

It is, nevertheless, the determined purpose of President Coolidge to maintain the friendly but firm stand of Secretary Kellogg, and his immediate predecessors, Messrs. Hughes, Colby, and Lansing, against 'confiscation' of legitimate American interest in Mexico.⁹

Only a few days after a very defensive and nationalistic response by Mexico to a United States protest, President Coolidge shows some awareness of the peculiar difficulties facing the Mexican Government at this time. He calls on the United States to be patient with Mexico. However, this expression of understanding does not mean an abandonment of the definite position of the United States regarding the new laws being retroactive and Mexico's abiding by her treaties.

A major article on January 10, although far more serious in tone than most others in this early period of United States reaction, indicates the main arguments that dominate United States-Mexican diplomatic attentions for the next few months. Entitled "Protest to Mexico Over New Oil Laws, May Bring a Break," the article has subheadings that make equally obvious the seriousness of the situation and the firm stand taken by Kellogg. In its first and second paragraphs it directs

⁹p. 1.

attention to "facts" so startling as to stir up action among some United States Senators anxious to protect the public from the dangers of secret diplomacy.¹⁰ It implies possible withdrawal of recognition based upon the reasoning that United States recognition of Mexico came only after Mexico assured the United States that American citizens and their rights would be protected. Thus, if these assurances were broken, the United States would appear justified in withdrawing her recognition.¹¹ That there were any agreements conditional for the recognition of the Obregon government was news to many Americans as well as to Mexicans. The present controversy thus goes back to incorporate as one of its issues the 1923 Bucareli Conferences and whether there were any binding agreements made therein by Mexico. Senators LaFollette, Norris, and Borah are active in getting both present 1926 diplomatic correspondence with Mexico and the papers of Payne and Warren relating to possible 1923 pre-recognition agreements before the public.¹²

This January 10 article of the New York Times discusses the retroactive basis of the United States protest and goes on to give some background for speculation about what present United States policy will be. It points out Kellogg's tough stand on property

¹⁰New York Times, January 17, 1926, p. 25.

¹¹New York Times, January 10, 1926, p. 1.

¹²New York Times, January 17, 1926, p. 25; January 21, p. 3; February 19, 1926, p. 12; editorial, Houston Post-Dispatch, March 10, 1926, p. 6.

rights by quoting his statement made the previous June when he first took office:

It is now the policy of this government to use its influence and its support in behalf of stability and orderly constitutional procedure, but it should be made clear that this government will continue to support the Government in Mexico only so long as it protects American lives and American rights, and complies with its international engagements and obligations.

The Government of Mexico is now on trial before the world. We have been patient and realize, of course, that it takes time to bring about a stable government but we cannot countenance violation of her obligations and failure to protect American citizens.¹³

Although the New York Times article of January 10 is an important exception, there is a tendency for official response and commentary of the New York Times to be more friendly and optimistic before January 21, 1926, and less thereafter. Curiously enough, on January 21 there is a New York Times editorial that is still reflective of earlier tones of optimism, whereas a statement from a State Department official is somewhat more belligerent, revealing the United States displeasure with Mexico and the growing of a staunch United States position. The editors of the New York Times respond respectfully and positively to the statement of Senor Saenz published the day before, pointing out that his assurance that the Land and Petroleum Laws are not retroactive

¹³Ibid. It was surprising to see this statement of Kellogg quoted again since even when originally made, especially the part regarding "the Government of Mexico" being "on trial before the world," it received harsh criticism and appeared only to cause unnecessarily hard feelings with the Mexican Government.

¹⁴Things begin to ease again in late March and April when diplomatic notes between the United States and Mexico are made public and executive regulations for the two laws are released.

or confiscatory means that we should be able to work things out amiably.¹⁵ However, the State Department release shows Kellogg sternly challenging the statement of the Mexican government that they are not retroactive or confiscatory.¹⁶ Even prior to this on January 17 amidst the optimistic prediction that Mexico was shifting to meet United States protest, there was a hint that the situation could become serious because Coolidge was leaving no room to do anything but retreat.¹⁷

By the week of January 24-30 a feeling of crisis over the new laws pervades reports of United States-Mexican relations. On January 25, one diplomat in Mexico City points out that "within a few days either the United States must back down from its position that American rights will be protected at all costs, or the Mexican government must seek a loophole in the present laws to preserve friendly relations with the States."¹⁸ Diplomatic argument having been open to the public in January, one can see the approaching "deadlock" which is pronounced in a major article, February 1 in the New York Times. During the month, despite the optimistic outlook that Mexico would come around, the actual protests of the United States and the Mexican replies have shown

¹⁵P. 20.

¹⁶P. 1. See below n. 75.

¹⁷New York Times, p. 25.

¹⁸New York Times, p. 2.

no common grounds upon which compromise and understanding could be reached.¹⁹ Their central arguments have headed straight for a dead end: The United States has argued that the Mexican Land and Petroleum Laws are "retroactive" and "confiscatory"; Mexico has denied that they are either, saying they do not apply to rights before 1917 which may be held to death;²⁰ dissatisfied with the reply of the Mexican government which says nothing new, Kellogg challenges its statement. Both in a feature interview with Calles and in a New York Times report on February 1, Calles is shown to be just as strong willed and "hard headed as President Coolidge."²¹ The New York Times notes that in the latest conference it appears that neither Sheffield or Calles gave an inch.²²

The coverage of the New York Times during the week of January 31-February 6 includes a variety of viewpoints. In addition to the

¹⁹The tones of much of the United States-Mexican correspondence, both official and through the press, reveal the real hindrance to compromise. It is true that some of the ambiguities pointed out by the New York Times—concerns of the United States such as an American citizen who owns land in Mexico having to agree not to call upon his own government for protection but to resort to Mexican institutions—were at least partially clarified by Mexican statements. However, much of the two nations statements appear to be circular arguments. Mexican statements such as that by Saenz on January 20 tended to be very defensive about the United States interference in her internal affairs especially when all the legalities had not been completed to put the new laws into force. The United States played her part in the circular arguments by making the same charges of "retroactive" and "confiscatory" over and over again.

²⁰New York Times, January 20, 1926, p. 1.

²¹February 6, 1926, p. 1; February 1, 1926, p. 1.

²²February 1, 1926, p. 1.

extensive commentary on the United States-Mexican diplomatic deadlock, it includes everything from an expression of the oil companies viewpoint to that of an interview with Calles which allows Calles to present himself and Mexican attitudes in a most effective way. Speaking for the oil interests, Guy Stevens is quoted by the New York Times:

The petroleum and land laws constitute a violation of the Mexican constitution, disregard of Mexican Supreme Court decisions, violation of agreements made in 1923 and disregard of the attitude of the United States Government. Carranza is overthrown, but the principles of his Government have been given more ruthless effect than Carranza ever dreamed.²³

Stevens argues that foreigners must be able to appeal to international law "as enforced by their respective Governments" in order to obtain justice.²⁴ Bruno Newman, who lived in Mexico twenty years and claims to admire both the country and its people, boils it all down in a letter to the editor of the New York Times to "too much politics and too little work." He sees politics present in the "false promises of land" that keep the people upset and even in the teachers who are the tools of propaganda.²⁵ In contrast to these other two pictures of Calles' Mexico and the Land and Petroleum Laws, the exclusive interview of the New York Times with Calles reveals him to be a reasonable man quite capable of answering questions and even charges made against him regarding subjects of current controversy. His answers, frequently quoted, are not oversimplified and they reveal his ability to make

²³January 31, 1926, sec. 2, p. 2.

²⁴New York Times, February 1, 1926, p. 2.

²⁵January 31, 1926, sec. 8, p. 12.

vital distinctions. In addition to showing Calles' own strength of mind and indicating his strong position internally in Mexico—conditions which allow him to assume an unchanging position toward the United States—the quotations of Calles in the New York Times show that he leaves the door open in one respect for possible agreement with the United States. Calles makes a big point of the fact that the laws which the United States are protesting are in an "incomplete legal situation"; he has not finished the executive regulations necessary for setting the scope and procedures of carrying out the laws.²⁶

In an editorial February 8, the New York Times reveals itself to be completely in agreement with the United States position protesting the land and property laws. Without any qualification it indicates that recognition of Mexico was only because of Mexico's agreement regarding American ownership of properties.²⁷ Its defense of the United States position includes a tracing of the history of the United States protection of property rights since the days of Carranza. It pays particular attention to the efforts of the Obregón government to gain recognition.

Although one can see the increasing seriousness of United States reaction to the Mexican Land and Petroleum Laws, even at the crisis point in early February when it is the most serious international problem of the moment, there is no danger of United States intervention.

²⁶February 6, 1926, pp. 1-2.

²⁷P. 18. J. Fred Rippey, "Mexico's Laws Against Foreign Land Ownership: Historical Development of Issues Involved," Current History, XXIV (June, 1926), 331-34 argues quite convincingly to the contrary.

What is being threatened is the breaking of official diplomatic relations.²⁸ The severest threat in 1926 prior to the complication of the reaction to the Land and Petroleum Laws with other more emotional issues was the lone query regarding the lifting of the embargo. A "prominent diplomat" asked whether the United States in case of suspending diplomatic relations with the Mexican government would lift the embargo on weapons to enemies of the Calles government.²⁹

After the crisis of early February, United States-Mexican diplomatic correspondence over the Land and Petroleum Laws takes place behind closed doors. The New York Times attempts to detect the mood of the negotiations with reports on the factual activity taking place around the correspondence. For example, it notes the calling in of Charles Beecher Warren to the conference of Coolidge with Ambassador Sheffield. However, it works with only bits of official information. Also, the development of other events in Mexico in February and March takes the exclusive press attention away from the negotiations over the Land and Petroleum Laws. During the second week of February in both the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune, attention turns to a serious development in the Special Claims Commission. Mexico is shown backing out of any payment on the claims due to the revolts of Villa, Zapata, or other "bandits." During the next months concern is voiced that the Commission's ruling in the Santa Ysabel case may be in

²⁸New York Times, February 1, 1926, p. 2.

²⁹New York Times, February 7, 1926, p. 24. The United States at this time had an embargo that prevented the selling of United States munitions to the enemies of a recognized government.

accordance with the Mexican position that she is responsible only for claims due to the Madero, Carranza, and Obregón revolutions. Since such a ruling would have disastrous consequences for most American claims, it would be unacceptable to the United States.

However, far more sensational than the work of any Commission are the stories of religious persecution and the Tia Juana Peteet case that break in the news a few days later. The Tia Juana Peteet case, which consisted of an American family that committed suicide after having their honor violated by the drugging and raping of their daughters when they crossed the border into Tia Juana, is handled quite factually by both the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune. The Chicago Tribune appears quite satisfied with the effective action taken by the central and local Mexican governments.³⁰ However, there are other daily papers that treat it quite differently. Some allow it to occupy more space than any other Mexican event in February; they may even allow it and the way it is handled by Mexicans to serve as incriminating evidence against all that is Mexican.³¹ Nevertheless,

³⁰February 14, 1926, p. 2.

³¹A major editorial of the Baltimore American, February 15, 1926, p. 16 under the large heading "ARE THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICIALS OF TIA JUANA TO GO UNPUNISHED?" not only gives an intemperate, sensationalized portrayal of the events in an attempt to create a moral outrage among Americans, but attempts to show the corrupt and irresponsible officials as indirectly responsible. The Commercial Appeal (Memphis), February 27, 1926, p. 6 generalizes from the obviously evil picture of Tia Juana to all Mexico; outraged by the State's measures against religion which has included closing many of the religious schools, the editor implies that in Mexico, liberty is just license such as you can see in "gambling resorts, houses of ill-fame, and other dens of iniquity" which "flourish and are unmolested."

the Tia Juana affair is a temporary cause of inflamed opinion. However, infractions of religious and individual freedoms continue for months to be a source of outrage to many Americans. The major daily papers as well as periodicals give extensive coverage to religious events in Mexico. The daily press highlights the very emotional personal accounts. It gives voice to the irrational appeals of some Americans for United States intervention to stop this moral outrage that both violates the rights of American citizens and endangers all religion.

After the dramatic news of religious persecution in Mexico, reaction to either the Land and Petroleum Laws or the Mexican Government's religious policy frequently entails the use of the other.³² The Mexican situation is shown as ominous. Several crises have arisen at once: the land and oil laws, religious turmoil, and Tia Juana.³³ On February 20 the headlines of a front-page article in the New York Times read "MEXICAN SITUATION CALLED PERILOUS." The article itself begins: "An intimation that feeling is developing in the relations between the Government of Mexico that might lead to trouble serious as that following the destruction of the Maine in Havana harbor in

³²These practices substantiate the statement quoted earlier in the Introduction from Miller, The Christian Century, XLIII, 411, that "all is good ammunition providing it discredits Mexico."

³³A lengthy front-page article from their special Washington correspondent appears in the February 21, 1926, issue of the Chicago Tribune with the headlines "U.S.-MEXICO NEAR A BREAK." Reviewing the correspondence, Arthur Sears Henning warns that even the last Mexican note reasserts the "directly opposite view" of Kellogg and indicates that a "showdown . . . is at hand."

1898 was contained in a resolution offered today by Representative Fairchild, Republican of New York. . . ." Fairchild's own attitude toward Mexico is that she has caused us far too much trouble for a long time and something should be done about it. He indicates that maybe this religious persecution will be enough to wake the American people up. His resolution calls upon Kellogg to present information to the House regarding all three subjects of crisis—"expulsion by Mexico of Americans because of their religious beliefs, the alleged confiscation of American property, and the 'outrages upon American citizens at Tia Juana.'"

The New York Times covers both sides of the reaction to Mexican events in Congress. It prints the accusations of American Catholics appearing before Congressional committees and covers the statements of Congressmen like Fairchild. However, it also quotes their opponents' reports of the Mexican activities and the views of those Senators who suspect that while diplomacy is being kept secret, the religious issue is being used to create hate between the people of the United States and Mexico.³⁴

Since even before the religious developments, a major emphasis of the New York Times has been that it is not the oil interests that makes the United States government so concerned and insistent with regard to the new Mexican Land and Petroleum Laws, but the small

³⁴March 2, 1926, pp. 1-2.

American property owners that will be affected.³⁵ Sometimes a statement of this fact is just interjected as a by-the-way remark perhaps with a few statistics. On other occasions, it is argued passionately, apparently as an effort to correct a propaganda attempt by some "radical Senators of the United States" to sell the public on the idea that it is the oil interests that are responsible for the tense situation between the United States and Mexico.³⁶ At still other times, personal examples are used to appeal to American ideals and make one feel the predicament of individual, small property owners in Mexico.³⁷ Note the emphasis on the small farmer in this New York Times effort to correct the false impression that it is oil or, even the holdings of large property owners like Hearst, about which the United States government is most concerned:

The smaller properties, in numerous instances little farms and ranches, are said to be thousands in number, and it is these 'little fellows' who are probably the principal concern of this government, their only hope being that in the end Washington will be able to negotiate a settlement that will at least partially safeguard their holdings, or make it possible for them to get a fair return in the event they are disposed of under the provisions of the new law.³⁸

After a month and a half of extensive and very mixed coverage of the controversial actions of the Mexican government—a time when

³⁵February 1, 1926, p. 1; February 20, 1926, p. 3; March 2, 1926, p. 2; March 7, 1926, p. 26; March 29, 1926, p. 4.

³⁶February 20, 1926, p. 3.

³⁷March 7, 1926, p. 26.

³⁸Ibid.

even articles in the New York Times show the great emotions of the people and events about which they are reporting, a time when the over-all picture of the Mexican government is rather black, and a time during which the conferences between Mexico and the oil companies conclude in failure—the diplomatic stalemate on the Land and Petroleum Laws is finally broken when Mexico publishes the land law regulations. The optimism that heralds the United States receipt of these regulations appears to be based not so much on actual changes that can be pointed to in the text of the regulations,³⁹ but on the way officials in Washington interpret the regulations. Reporting on the reaction in "official quarters," the New York Times writes that "the land law regulations are now looked upon as a practical solution of the problems involved in the alien legislation;" thus, "it is anticipated that the oil regulations will be not less favorable."⁴⁰ The major New York Times article on April 12 confirms the substance of the late optimism. It reports on the ten notes that made up the diplomatic correspondence between the United States and Mexico over the land and oil laws which have just been made public. Their summary by the New York Times shows many aspects of contention have been cleared up; and regarding those minor ones that are still unsettled, there is a confidence that they will be. Even the headlines make obvious that the "SNARL WITH MEXICO OVER LAND AND OIL CLEARED BY NOTES."⁴¹

³⁹New York Times, March 30, 1926, p. 11.

⁴⁰April 2, 1926, p. 1.

⁴¹P. 1.

Thus ended the first round of the United States and Mexico over the Land and Petroleum Laws; the daily press during the months of January through April shows the details of the United States immediate reaction to these revolutionary Mexican laws affecting the property of American citizens in Mexico. As pointed out by The Literary Digest and confirmed by the treatment of the New York Times, it is amazing that there are several newspapers who see the wisdom of the United States and Mexico working together, rather than getting excited by those in both countries that appeal for nationalistic action. From the newspaper coverage of late March and April there appears to be a maturity evident not only in United States diplomacy, but also in the press reaction to the solution which is not a complete or definite victory for either side.⁴²

A Delineation of Major Segments of American Reaction

American reaction to the Land and Petroleum laws is marked by its variety. One finds within the journalistic coverage of Mexico in 1926 everything from amazing attempts to understand the Mexican situation, frequently accompanied by a criticism of the Kellogg-Sheffield legalistic approach, to demands for United States intervention. These demands for intervention, however, do not come until after reports on the religious persecution have begun to influence public opinion. Also of

⁴²"Our Tiff with Mexico Settled," The Literary Digest, LXXIX, (May 1, 1926), p. 16. These indications of diplomatic and press maturity apply only to the specified time period. Although significant in their existence at all, they do not provide a basis for further generalization.

interest to the social historian is the nature of the relationship of American public opinion in 1926 to United States foreign policy. At times the contrast of public opinion and United States Mexican policy, or the influence of one on the other, is such as to even spark comment by those writing in 1926.

A major argument of the Mexican government was that it had the right to pass whatever laws it chose; if the enforcement of a law showed concrete case of injury, then the Mexican courts would handle it. Although statements of Kellogg did not directly challenge Mexico's sovereignty to pass whatever laws necessary, their emphasis on international law and Mexican treaty commitments as well as the timing of the earlier protest did indirectly have this effect. The Christian Century is critical of the State Department in what appears to it to be a seeking of special protection for foreign property rights in Mexico. An early March article in The Christian Century points out that Coolidge's present Mexican policy shows only too clearly that Coolidge still believes that "'the principal business of American is business.'"⁴³ Taking a position similar to that of the Emergency Foreign Policy Conference, The Christian Century indicates that Mexico has the right to pass whatever laws she chooses to control her property and natural resources as long as there is no discrimination against any certain nationals.⁴⁴ Giving a sympathetic explanation of the Mexican property

⁴³"The Coolidge Business Policy," XLIII (March 4, 1926), 278-79.

⁴⁴Ibid.; New York Times, March 15, 1926, p. 11.

laws, it points out that Mexico's designation of the maximum property a single person can have is not discriminating against foreigners but treating all alike; owners can sell the surplus. It reveals the only discrimination against aliens to be in border areas; and, from the record of the past, this is understandable.⁴⁵

Articles in The Christian Century sometimes charge the Coolidge-Kellogg policy of using United States power to protect and guarantee the property of a certain few American capitalists, while disregarding the effects on the Mexican people.⁴⁶ More often, they do not indicate such purposeful misuse of power, but instead show the tragedy of the legalistic approach taken by Secretary Kellogg and especially Ambassador Sheffield. Sheffield is portrayed as a legalistic man, with a "glint of steel in his eye." Showing himself to be a man of the old school where right is right and wrong is wrong, he is quoted saying "that the ten commandments meant the same things in Spanish as in English, and that justice did not materially differ whether to be according to English common law or Spanish statute law."⁴⁷ The good

⁴⁵"The Mexican Muddle," The Christian Century, XLIII (March 18, 1926), 344.

⁴⁶Hubert Herring quoted in John R. Scotford, "The Ambassador Meets Some Citizens," XLIII (May 20, 1926), 644; "The Coolidge Business Policy," XLIII, 279.

⁴⁷Scotford, The Christian Century, XLIII, 644. Part of the difficulty over interpretation of the Land and Petroleum Laws that led to the deadlock was that according to Anglo-Saxon legal opinion they were retroactive but based on the Spanish legal traditions they were not retroactive. Unique among the daily coverage, this fact is mentioned by the New York Times, March 30, p. 11 and is called the "fundamental truth of the controversy."

intentions and sincerity of Ambassador Sheffield are not questioned. In fact, it is stated that Sheffield was not against the distribution of the land to the Mexican people; he admitted that such acts were "praiseworthy." Sheffield's complaint was that the land was not being paid for and this to him was violation of what he considered his "duty to protect to the utmost American lives and American property."⁴⁸ The criticism of Sheffield, whose imprint was naturally on all United States diplomacy which went through him in the early months of 1926, was that he was first and always a lawyer. As one writer explains, he "has lived in an atmosphere of legal distinction until to his mind there is no real distinction between a legal right and a moral right."⁴⁹ After a visit to Mexico which included an interview with Ambassador Sheffield, a serious student of Mexican affairs, Hubert Herring, catches the spirit of the real tragedy:

Over against all other impressions, one leaves Mexico with a sense of burdening sin for all transgressions of our nation. I listened to Ambassador Sheffield, and felt the deadening chill of his attitude, his unyielding, his unconsciously cruel, failure to understand what is happening in Mexico today, in his ceaseless refrain about right and lives, American lives and American rights. The ambassador is but a symbol of the attitude which America has taken for a hundred years.⁵⁰

Throughout 1926 in both the daily press and periodicals Sheffield stands somewhat as a symbol of the dominance of this very major legalistic strand in United States foreign policy. While diplomatic

⁴⁸Ibid., quoting James Rockwell Sheffield.

⁴⁹Scotford, The Christian Century, XLIII, 645.

⁵⁰"Mexico's Spiritual Rebirth," The Christian Century, XLIII (July 22, 1926), 917.

correspondence with Mexico is being kept secret, the New York Times, as well as individual journalists, take note of the extent to which Sheffield is involved in State Department consultations. They use this information as a key to detecting the mood of the negotiations with Mexico. When Charles Warren is called in for consultation by Coolidge and Kellogg, there is conjecture that perhaps Sheffield's imprint will not be as extensive on the next note to Mexico. There are similar predictions of a more conciliatory attitude of the United States when it appears that Sheffield is being circumvented in the delivery of United States correspondence. (The latest United States note was sent to Mexico by way of its Ambassador Tellez.)⁵¹ After Kellogg's announcement that things are settled between the United States and Mexico—an action interpreted by some as a passing over Sheffield's head—there is even speculation as to the likelihood that Sheffield will resign.⁵² Expressions of those who have property and other investments in Mexico indicate there have been no substantive changes by Mexico to justify this apparent shift in the policy of the United States. They, therefore, think it will be difficult for Sheffield to be anything other than a "staunch defender of American rights."⁵³ While criticizing the government's lack of protection, they praise and express their confidence in Ambassador Sheffield: "In Mr. Sheffield

⁵¹New York Times, March 3, 1926, p. 7.

⁵²New York Times, March 5, 1926, p. 10.

⁵³Ibid.

we undoubtedly have an Ambassador who sees facts and whose policy is not that of catering to the American public not interested in Mexico, but to those who have unfortunately embarked their money and labor he means to see they have that real protection which they justly claim."⁵⁴

Although The Christian Century contains numerous articles which are sympathetic to Mexico and critical of any press coverage or official policy that might lead to serious trouble with Mexico, it is not the sole source for such an understanding reaction to the Land and Petroleum Laws. Other contemporary sources of opinion that are sympathetic to the dawning new day in Mexico evident in her new legislation and reform programs include articles in the American Federationist, Current History, Foreign Affairs, The Forum, The Nation, The Outlook, The New Republic, and The Survey. The means they use in presenting a sympathetic view of the Land and Petroleum Laws as well as other reforms vary. They frequently choose words and images which will appeal to American ideals. For example, Calles may be portrayed as the hard-working, energetic, efficiency-minded businessman concerned with cleaning up customs, reforming the army, decreasing violence as well as using scientific means to reform tax structure and speeding land distribution.⁵⁵ Mexican reforms may be referred to and shown as

⁵⁴New York Times, March 14, 1926, sec. 8, p. 14. William H. King, United States Senator from Utah, writing "Mexico's Laws Against Foreign Land Ownership; IV. Mexico's Policy of Confiscation" in Current History, XXIV (June, 1926) gives a similar supporting portrayal of Kellogg and his relations to the changing United States diplomacy on p. 344.

⁵⁵Ernest Gruening, "President Calles's First Year," The Forum, LXXV (January, 1926), 53-55; Chester M. Wright, "Mexico's Peaceful Revolution Under Calles," Current History, XXIV (July, 1926), 505.

"self-help and self-development" programs.⁵⁶ Rather than insinuating alien Communism as some antagonists, they may use the term "homestead laws" to conjure the right image when referring to Mexican efforts to give land to the landless agricultural workers.⁵⁷ To place events in a broader perspective, they frequently use both Mexican history and factual reminders of some of the legal rights of individuals sacrificed by the United States in order to do what was necessary for the welfare of the people as a whole. They may remind the United States that in the interest of humanity or of the greatest good for the greatest number it too has "confiscated slaves, and breweries and saloons and destroyed reasonable expectations of stockholders in certain monopolies and public service corporations."⁵⁸ There are also those who realistically point out that "the good old days" when there was no "limitation of the reckless liberties of the foreigner" and "an American was above the law" are in the past.⁵⁹ They realize there is no going back.

Articles in several magazines show the conflict with Mexico over the Land and Petroleum Laws as one in which there is no simple right or

⁵⁶Wright, Current History, XXIV, 505.

⁵⁷Santiago Iglesias, "The Case of Mexico," American Federationist, XXXIII (March, 1926), 313; Plutarco Elias Calles, "The Policies of Mexico Today," Foreign Affairs, V (October, 1926), 4.

⁵⁸J. Fred Rippy, "Mexico's Laws Against Foreign Land Ownership: Historical Development of Issues Involved," Current History, XXIV (June, 1926), 336. Similar examples with a few additions are given in "The Mexican Complications," The Nation, CXXII (March 17, 1926), 272.

⁵⁹Carleton Beals, "The Mexican Church on Trial," The Survey, LVII (October 1, 1926), 14.

wrong side, but one where legal right comes into conflict with moral right. This interpretation has meaning both on a national diplomatic level in the emphasis on international law and on the thinking of individuals as seen in the discussion of Ambassador Sheffield. According to one journalist, the American tends to think of a clear-cut legal right based upon his title to the land. If Mexico takes his property from him or even causes its value to diminish, this is stealing and there is no question that "Thou shalt not steal." However, in the eyes of the Mexicans, the holding of Mexican land by foreigners is at the expense of the masses of the Mexican people; in their view, human rights should be set above legal rights.⁶⁰ The New Republic shows that the real problem is that two good cases exist. Nevertheless, it goes on to say that "some day, our people will have to make up their minds whether the maintenance of a friendly relationship with Mexico is worth more to the country than insistence upon a doctrine which in effect is no more than extra-territoriality; the doctrine that American capital must carry with it to any part of the world the same unusual degree of protection it enjoys within the boundaries of the United States."⁶¹ A student of United States-Mexican affairs who publishes a book on the subject during the year argues as follows: "Considerations of equity and humanity as applied to millions of people may outweigh the legal rights, not infrequently acquired in the first instance by

⁶⁰John R. Scotford, "Mexico We Have Ever Near Us: III," Letter to the editor, The Forum, LXXVI (August, 1926), 312-13.

⁶¹"The Week," The New Republic, XLV (January 20, 1926), 226.

shady transactions, of a few thousand individuals whose happiness and existence would not be seriously threatened by the partial loss of these rights."⁶²

Although sometimes pointing out that some of the property rights defended by United States power were gotten originally by ill means, those who sympathize with Mexico and agree with her right to pass laws to control her own resources in behalf of the welfare of her people are not typically devoid of sympathy for individuals whose rights are endangered by the new laws. More typical is the dual sentiment expressed by John Dewey. His interests in Mexico's educational and cultural experiments lead him to evaluate its whole social structure. He writes that "one can sympathize with foreigners in Mexico who find that their legal rights are not assured; yet from the standpoint of business in the long run as well as from that of human development, vested legalities are secondary to the creation of an integrated people."⁶³ Dewey is not alone in using a two-pronged argument in favor of human rights over legal rights. There are others who argue both as humanist and as logician, pointing out what is good for the Mexican people today is also what will bring the most to Americans—even property owners—in the long run.⁶⁴

⁶²Rippy, Current History, XXIV, 336. The title of Rippy's book published in 1926 is The United States and Mexico; it is reviewed by Charles A. Beard in The New Republic, XLVIII (October 13, 1926), 225-26.

⁶³"Mexico's Educational Renaissance," The New Republic, XLVIII (September 22, 1926), 118.

⁶⁴Rippy, Current History, XXIV, 337.

Isolationist sentiments appear to have a pervasive effect on 1926 opinion. Although pulling against the emotional waves created by the daily press coverage, there is a tendency among many Americans to advocate letting Mexico take care of her own internal affairs. The reasons for the masses of Americans not getting on a bandwagon of crusading idealism or feverish nationalism may not correspond exactly with those expressed by opinion makers of isolationist persuasion; yet the numerous periodical reminders that public opinion will not tolerate United States intervention in Mexico or any United States action that may set the stage for such a conflict with Mexico continue throughout the year as indications of the unyielding reality of this mass sentiment.⁶⁵ Opinion makers who argue that Mexican laws and the enforcement of Mexico's Constitution are internal affairs in which the United States should not interfere do not necessarily agree with what is going on in Mexico. They only are sure that it is not in the interest of the United States to try to keep other countries from experimenting. In fact, an article in The Outlook uses historical analogies to point out how attempts to stop other countries from experimenting with new ideas have helped in bringing about the downfall of great powers.⁶⁶

None the less, some newspapers and periodicals that tend to give expression to isolationist sentiment in 1926 also frequently have a

⁶⁵"The Mexican Muddle," The Christian Century, XLIII, 343, 345; "Mexico Outlawing the Church," The Literary Digest, LXXXVIII (March 6, 1926), 31; "Can Mexico Grow Up?," The Outlook, CXLIV (September 22, 1926), 108; "Mexico's Move to Confiscate American Property," The Literary Digest, XCI (December 11, 1926), 6.

⁶⁶"How Far Is Mexico's Business Ours?," CXLIII (August 25, 1926), 563.

point—although its position may vary—where the line is drawn on the desirability of the United States staying out of Mexico's affairs. For instance, the above mentioned article in The Outlook which indicates that Mexico has the right to experiment with what she wants, even Communism, draws the line when Mexico interferes with the "rights of others." It takes a definite position against Mexico breaking agreements with the United States, arguing that Mexico can enact retroactive laws against her own people—that is her business—but not against the United States because of treaty rights.⁶⁷

The editorial comments of the New York Times, as seen earlier in the more detailed account of events in January-April, 1926, and the Philadelphia Public Ledger frequently take some of the same reasoned stances as those of the State Department. Of course, they vary sometimes to the right or left since there is even fluctuation in the attitude and mood of the administration's policy. The editorial comment of the Public Ledger reveals some understanding of Mexican hatred of diplomatic protests which are seen by Mexicans as interferences with her sovereignty;⁶⁸ however, the main thrust of its argument is taken from the viewpoint of the United States. It indicates that American property owners and businesses in Mexico have lived in uncertainty since the 1917 Constitution.⁶⁹ They have looked to

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸January 12, 1926, p. 10.

⁶⁹Statements by oil company officials in the New York Times support this generalization of the Public Ledger.

Article 14 as giving them some protection at least on paper, but now that the Mexican Congress has passed the Land and Petroleum Laws they do not know where they stand. The Public Ledger shows that the United States has a strong case against the "anti-foreign law" based on Article 14 of the Mexican Constitution prohibiting a law from being retroactive and on the 1923 Warren-Payne negotiations.⁷⁰ Citing property rights and their protection to be the supreme United States objective since 1917, the Public Ledger editorial goes on extensively with an emotional account of the events of 1923-1924. It tells how the support of the United States in the form of recognition and embargo of weapons going to Obregon's enemies saved his government from the de la Huerta revolt.⁷¹ It chastises the Mexican government for passing these laws which they consider an "act of bad faith." Stating that "in her 'trial before the world' Mexico . . . has not met the test," it reprimands her for not meeting her international responsibilities.⁷² Yet, despite all this moral lecturing, the extent of the United States punishment threatened is the withdrawal of recognition.

The editorials of the New York Herald Tribune take a slightly more interventionist position toward what it regards as the breaking of treaty commitments by Mexico. However, they do not openly use the term "intervention" in 1926 until after the beginning of the reports

⁷⁰John Page, January 11, 1926, p. 1; editorial, January 11, 1926, p. 8.

⁷¹January 11, 1926, p. 8.

⁷²Ibid.

on the religious persecutions in Mexico. Reviewing the history of the United States treatment of Mexico, the New York Herald Tribune shows the United States as long suffering and patient. It indicates that we could be sympathetic with the Mexican struggle to pull out of her "primitive conditions" if only she would not violate her treaty commitments. However, stressing these violations the New York Herald Tribune concludes that if a clash must come, then this time let the intervention be conclusive.⁷³ Prior to the religious issue, the response of the New York Herald Tribune to the Land and Petroleum Laws had been a staunch, although not sensationally unreasonable, position that the United States is not going to "sacrifice" its investments to solve Mexican problems.⁷⁴ It commented that "the present diplomatic disagreement is over the apparent tendency of the Mexican government to try to keep its promises in appearance, while nullifying them in fact."⁷⁵

The Chicago Tribune does not express an exact editorial position on the Land and Petroleum Laws during the months of January and February. Its news columns do indicate support of Coolidge's policy not only when it shows a determination to stand up for American rights, but even providing tolerant coverage to Coolidge's January emphasis on the necessity of American patience. More revealing, in its extensive financial coverage the Chicago Tribune maintains that regardless of

⁷³Editorial, February 19, p. 14.

⁷⁴Editorial, February 9, 1926, p. 20.

⁷⁵Ibid. Such an interpretation of events appears to express directly what the statements of Secretary Kellogg had been implying. See above p. 73.

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other improvements on the Mexican financial scene, Mexico is not going to be lent more money as long as she passes confiscatory laws.⁷⁶ It reasons that "a country which confiscates property by legislation will not hesitate, it is fair to conclude, to repudiate its debts by legislation."⁷⁷ Also of great interest is the Chicago Tribune editorial of January 22 which implies that there are forces of natural phenomena at work in shaping the relations of Mexico and the United States. In an unemotional, detached manner, it denies that there is any conscious imperialistic ambition in the United States to supply a basis for Mexico's great fear of intervention from the North. However, it goes on to speak about how American people do not think things out but respond according to forces at work. Although denying that it is making any threat, it points out to Mexico that to try to exclude Americans completely will sooner or later cause a reaction and a forceful penetration. Its emphasis on the forces at work between a developed and a less developed land of opportunities to bring about such a reaction tends to relieve any personal or national responsibility for it in the United States.⁷⁸

Calls for intervention begin to appear after the Mexican religious issue joins that of the property laws before the American public. After the middle of February the New York Times and other major daily

⁷⁶The particular improvement that prompts this statement was Mexico's announcement that she was resuming interest payments on her debt.

⁷⁷Editorial, February 8, 1926, p. 8.

⁷⁸P. 8.

papers carry reports, including flavorful quotations and letters to the editor, on those who in effect call for intervention; also, their headlines sometimes misleadingly suggest intervention as a real possibility for United States policy.⁷⁹ The Literary Digest quotes from the editorial comment of other major papers to show the great variety in the reaction to Mexican events. It includes many that express harsh attitudes and contain emotional appeals to do far more than just withdraw recognition.⁸⁰ However, of those writing for periodicals, most who favor an interventionist policy for reasons of property, religion, or otherwise do not use the word or pursue it with logical arguments; instead, they paint the blackest picture possible of the purposes and activities of the Mexican government and frequently of the Mexicans themselves. There are some attempts to show logically the broader dangers to world investment and to the prestige of the United States if Mexican retroactive and confiscatory Land and Petroleum Laws are allowed to be enforced.⁸¹ However, these appeals to

⁷⁹It is not, however, until the very end of the year after the State Department has focused attention on Mexican involvement in revolutionary activity in Central America suggesting both its Bolshevik nature and its imperialistic dimension that endanger the canal zone, that in fact there is a real danger of United States intervention. Some guardians of the public draw attention to what appears a propaganda device of the State Department at the end of 1926, but the degree of this danger is not really measurable without the more numerous reactions in 1927.

⁸⁰"Mexico Outlawing the Church," LXXXVIII, 30-31; "Must Intervention Save the Church in Mexico?," LXXXIX (April 3, 1926), 28-29; "The Call for Intervention in Mexico," XC (August 21, 1926), 10.

⁸¹New York Times, February 28, 1926, p. 13.

logic are rare compared to pictures of Mexico such as the following, unbelievably by a United States Senator:

The Mexican Government not only has failed to render indemnification for these losses, but has deliberately entered upon an official policy of confiscation of American property in that country under the guise of improving the agrarian laws. . . . Extensive developed agricultural properties of Americans have been seized by the Mexican Government and have been parceled out to irresponsible Communists who harvest the crops and then move on to other confiscated properties. These confiscations are covered under the pretense of payment in agrarian bonds which are valueless, and even the nominal value of these bonds are ascertained by methods which ignore every real element of value. This is purely a communistic movement. It is against religion as well as against those fundamental rights of liberty and property which are the basis of constitutional government, but the exercise of which the Communist denominates as capitalism and bourgeois civilization.⁸²

U.S. Reaction to the Mexican Church-State Conflict

The daily press and periodicals in the United States give more extensive coverage to the "factual" details and American arguments about the religious conflict in Mexico than any other one issue in 1926. At least 57 out of a total of 172 magazine articles on Mexican affairs have the Church-State conflict as their major subject, a number far exceeding those devoted to the issue of the Land and Petroleum Laws. They reach a sub-peak in the months of March and April reacting to the initial stages of deportations of foreign clergy, closing of schools and general violations of the "right" of the clergy; subside during May and June; and then build toward a climax in the critical months of July and August. Out of a total coverage (articles

⁸²King, Current History, XXIV, 343.

in English indexed by the Reader's Guide and the International Index) of twenty-seven articles for the month of August, nineteen deal largely with the Church-State issue. Similarly with the daily press, the New York Times and the Chicago Tribune begin their coverage of the details of religious persecution in the middle of February; the peak coverage of the New York Times, which is in August, averages about eight articles a day on Mexican affairs, the largest part dealing with the religious crisis.

The initial stages of the Church-State conflict overlap with the reaction to the Land and Petroleum Laws, and thus, are the most pertinent for this analysis. In the New York Times the introduction of the government's anti-religious activities is a dramatic front-page report of the Mexican government's nationalization of church property and seizing of alien priests to deport.⁸³ No hint to the reader of this developing situation had preceded it in small articles on secondary pages as is often the case in the New York Times. The dramatic tone of the initial article and the bad light in which the State is shown is perhaps partially explained by the fact that it was taken from a Mexican newspaper, El Universal.⁸⁴ After this introductory article, the New York Times February coverage of the details of the anti-clerical activities of the Mexican government is largely factual, but facts

⁸³February 12, 1926.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 1, 11. A further reading of the New York Times coverage of religious activities by the State reveals that other of the more incriminating articles are made up of "facts" taken from El Universal. Quotations from El Universal show it to have a very pro-Church editorial policy that influences its selection and account of the "facts."

which do tend to incriminate the State. Although giving coverage to Representatives Fairchild and Boylan and Archbishop Curley's calls for United States action,⁸⁵ it is not until February 28 that the New York Times includes an article that places the religious events in Mexico in a historical context more favorable to the State.⁸⁶

The Chicago Tribune maintains a rather mixed factual coverage of religious events in Mexico in February. With the exception of some article headlines such as "Schools Closed, Mexican Pupils Live in Streets," the tone of its coverage excludes sensationalism. Its correspondent, John Corynn, even precedes the New York Times in reporting Protestant denial that its missionaries are being persecuted by the Mexican government.⁸⁷ In addition to reporting rumors of actions against the Protestant missionaries on February 14, the Chicago Tribune gives the essence of a talk with the corresponding secretary of the Methodist Episcopal Church who denies the persecution rumors. This religious leader explains that "foreign born

⁸⁵Coverage is given on February 19, p. 12 to a statement of La Guardia warning that "certain people have been trying for years to get the United States involved in a conflict with Mexico." However, such matter-of-fact reminders could hardly bring the attention of Representatives Fairchild and Boylan's emotional appeals to nationalism and religious freedom.

⁸⁶p. 2. This perspective of Mexican events including many quotations from the Mexican Secretary of the Interior is similar to that given by some periodicals who use Mexican history to show the extent of political power of the Catholic Church in Mexico, and the Church's tendency to keep the Indians in ignorance.

⁸⁷The first Protestant denial in the New York Times is not until February 28. Until this time, there were only the statements of Catholic officials attempting to unite all religions in the outcry against not just Catholic persecution, but religious persecution.

missionaries . . . are working toward the same goal as the government of Mexico. They maintain only an advisory relationship with native ministers, having in view the development of a Mexican church and the ultimate withdrawal of others."⁸⁸

In March and April the New York Times gives coverage to both sides of United States reaction. It presents the views of American Catholics and their colleagues demanding intervention to protect the rights of American nationals and to prevent the extermination of religion. It also reports on those who consider the Church-State conflict in Mexico an internal matter not to be interfered with by the United States and who fear its use as a propaganda device. However, the sensational flavor and the fervor of the arguments of Representative Boylan and Archbishop Curley, as well as the emotional experiences of those who have been deported from Mexico, give the views of those who demand an interventionist United States policy an added dimension of attention. Quotations from speeches of Boylan and Curley attack the Mexican 1917 Constitution; they show Mexico as an "international outlaw" like Russia and in their more unreasonable moments hurl such emotional terms as "robbers," "slaves," and "Bolshevist."⁸⁹ For those who just scan the news, the New York Times article headlines of a report on Curley's analysis of the Mexican Constitution to be published the next day in the Baltimore Catholic Review reads: "CURLEY SAYS MEXICO WOULD EXPEL SAVIOR: Archbishop of Baltimore Says Robbers are in Power and

⁸⁸P. 3.

⁸⁹March 5, 1926, p. 10. During the House hearings on the Boylan Resolution much publicity is given to his statement as well as to dramatic personal testimony of those like Mother Semple who were deported from Mexico.

Have Ended Religious Freedom."⁹⁰

Among the news reports on the situation in Mexico there are individual tragedies revealed by some of the returning clergy which carry great emotional impact. For instance, the self-revelation of one victim is made more impressive by first picturing her as a dedicated Mother Superior keeping quietly to herself and her devotions. Upon her return Mother Superior Lorenza Rivarrez is quoted by the New York Times saying in reference to the 200 girls she had been teaching in Mexico City:

It has been a very sad thing to see them driven out and the convent looted and closed. . . .

What is there left for me? Retirement into the convent in Barcelona. I am too old to start again the work I have spent my life accomplishing, which has been destroyed in one day.⁹¹

Father Victor Fabre who speaks of the expulsions, looting in Mexico, and his brutal treatment by police also draws attention to the love of the people for the Church that would cause them to revolt if they could. The New York Times quotes his suggestive appeal for intervention:

During the days in prison I received a constant stream of visitors from among the people and devout. They are badly distressed over the course of the Government against the Catholic clergy. If they had the strength they would be in open revolt. As it is they pray for the intervention of this country to rescue them from a tyrannous [sic] Government.⁹²

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹March 5, 1926, p. 10.

⁹²Ibid. A "factual article on March 20, 1926, p. 12 shows the people so upset that they are rioting in the streets of San Luis Potosi and government troops are firing on them."

Regarding the possibility of a revolution, a major front page article on March 13 does give lengthy treatment to the possible revolt by Gen. Enrique Estrada a former de la Huerta leader to save Mexico from "'Bolshevism' and 'anarchy.'"⁹³

Articles taking an opposite point of view are somewhat more difficult to find in the New York Times in March and April. They are from more diverse sources and frequently show the impossibility of separating reaction to the property and religious issues. A letter to the editor by R. Munoz-Tebar on March 10 is a critical reaction to Boylan's statement in which he labeled Mexico as Bolshevik. In contrast to Boylan who showed Mexico, just like Bolshevik Russia, violating the "fundamental rights of humanity," he explains in sympathetic terms the things Mexico is doing that gets her called such names:

Mexico has put in practice the agrarian laws; because she wishes to uplift the conditions of the peons; because she is striving in her own fashion and with a mind enriched by practical experience to produce the greatest good for the greatest number, in preference to opening up the country for exploitation by foreigners. If the agrarian laws are impracticable, the Mexicans themselves must find it out in

⁹³Later in a small article the substance of this possible danger to the Calles government is denied; however, it is curious that Estrada's views on the property laws and religious measures—both in accordance with those of United States protestors—were given such lengthy treatment in the New York Times on March 13. Its article headlines read: "ESTRADA PREDICTS CALLES OVERTHROW IN MEXICAN CRISIS." Subheadings reveal the substance of his position without even the necessity of reading the article which is continued on p. 6: "Rebel General, Calling for End of 'Bolshevism' and 'Anarchy,' Hints at New Revolution—Sees Ruin in Land Policy—He Insists on Recompense in the Partition of Estates—Declares Alien Law Not Retroactive—Champions Ousted Clergy—Former de la Huerta Leader, Now in California, Charges Present Regime Violates Constitution."

the same manner that Americans may find out sooner or later if prohibition is feasible.⁹⁴

Under the article headlines "Says Mexico Moves to End Church Veto," the New York Times gives the views of the Mexican government that emphasize that unlike the Catholic Church in the United States the political power exercised by the Catholic Church in Mexico even today attempts to keep people from obeying the law; it also shows the antiquity of such reform efforts to limit the power of the Church by tracing them back to the time of Juarez.⁹⁵ One of the more interesting expressions about the Mexican religious situation is made by a representative of American labor. When questioned about labor's view of the Mexican religious situation, he does not trap himself by taking a position either for or against. He indicates that it is difficult for Americans to understand the situation in Mexico. He goes on to reveal that even though he believes in American ideals and institutions, he does not think they are always appropriate for other countries.⁹⁶ The New York Times quotes him saying, "we do not offer ourselves as moral dictators or as models of the human race." Although showing that he does not approve of some of the things that the Mexican government is doing, he emphasizes that United States labor is not going to help those that are using "the religious situation in Mexico to stir up the hatred of America against the Mexican Government."⁹⁷

⁹⁴P. 22.

⁹⁵March 15, 1926, p. 11.

⁹⁶New York Times, April 5, 1926, p. 2.

⁹⁷Ibid.

I have included only a few examples of the emotional personal dramas and the enraged statements by American Catholic leaders in comparison to their number in the daily press. However, I hope they give a taste that, when added to the hundreds of "factual" reports on the deportation of the clergy, religious violence, infraction of clergy rights, and closing of many schools by the state, does give some concept of the tone and dimensions of the coverage of the religious issue in the more respected newspapers. Even in the sampling of newspaper coverage some of the major arguments of Catholic, Protestant, and liberal positions are indicated. However, their positions are revealed more clearly in the lengthier and more numerous arguments in periodicals.

American Catholics and those who had common interest with them attack the Mexican 1917 Constitution. Seeing its strict enforcement by the Calles government as the cause of their troubles, they attempt to undermine American respect for it as Mexico's fundamental law.⁹⁸ Their arguments label it Bolshevik in content and origin, and maintain

⁹⁸There are exceptions to this generalization regarding American Catholics. There are a few instances where individual liberal Catholics such as Harry W. Pascoe in "The Catholic Church Conflict in Mexico: I. An American Catholic's Criticism of the Church," Current History, XXV (November, 1926), 157-61 express their disagreement with the official Catholic Church interpretation of the Church-State issue in Mexican history. Such Catholic liberals point out the complete difference in the situations between the reactionary Catholic Church in Mexico and its relation to the Mexican political and social structure, and that of the Catholic Church in the United States. Pointing out its extensive land holdings and its political power which have bred intolerance and "selfish ecclesiasticism," they criticize American Catholics for being misled by those who would use the religious issue to bring about a change of government. They criticize them in general for not perceiving the differences in the United States and Mexican historic problems that make demands for similar rights in the present somewhat ludicrous.

it is illegal because it has no national sanction. They show their contempt for it by numerous minor insinuations. Not capitalizing "constitution" when referring to the 1917 Constitution, putting it in quotes and even referring to it as the "so-called Constitution of 1917" are common practices. They show it as just the result of one more revolution in which after the fighting "new laws, or even new 'constitutions'" are set up to protect the new dictator and his seized fortune.⁹⁹ The following official defense for the Catholic Church written by a Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame is representative in tone of the denunciations of the Mexican Constitution and government:

Its 'Constitution' is Bolshevik; the manner in which the 'Constitution' has been imposed on the country is Bolshevik. Its agrarianism, as put into effect, is pure Bolshevism. Its sovietization of industries is Bolshevik. It is Bolshevik in the worst sense of the term; all its acts, all its utterances and documents convict it as such. Its secularism, stateolatry, autocracy, absolutism, unlicensed despotism, radicalism, unconstitutionalism; it is all these in the extreme degree.¹⁰⁰

Arguments of the Catholic clergy and the Knights of Columbus attempt to unite all religious opinion in the United States against atheism by showing that Calles' enforcement of the religious provisions

⁹⁹Constantine E. McGuire, "The Church and State Conflict in Mexico: I. The American Catholic View," Current History, XXIV (July, 1926), 489-90.

¹⁰⁰Charles Phillips, "The Catholic Church Conflict in Mexico: II. Official Catholic Defense of the Church in Mexico," Current History, XXV (November, 1926), 170. Although this selection is typical of many denunciations, it is not representative of the author, who only moments before was arguing reasonably with the use of historical scholarship.

of the Constitution were affecting Protestant missionaries as well as Catholic clergy. After Protestants begin to deny these "facts," they continue to point out that although Calles may have started with the Catholics, this is only political strategy in his campaign to stamp out all religions. When he has the Catholics under control, the same principles will then be applied to the Protestants.¹⁰¹ Their arguments to unite American opinion in their behalf also include the nationalist threat that if the United States does not enforce Mexican respect of the rights of Americans (some of the members of the clergy being expelled are American citizens), the United States will lose the esteem of all Latin America and increase the danger that they will follow the Mexican policy in the treatment of the rights of Americans.¹⁰²

American Catholics and their friends in this war against the Mexican government defend the Catholic Church against the accusations of those who are more favorable to the State. They argue that it is the State with its violence and revolution, not the Church, that is responsible for Mexico's lack of progress. Using different selections of history from their opponents, they also attempt to show that what progress has been made in civilizing the Indians has been because of the Catholic Church and its clergy, who have been their protector throughout modern history. To emphasize the extent of this progress,

¹⁰¹Examples of this can be found in Francis C. Kelley, "The Church Side of the Mexican Conflict," The Survey, LVII (October 1, 1926), 19; and Arnaldo Cipolla, "Church and State in Mexico: II." The Living Age, CCCXXX (August 21, 1926), 411.

¹⁰²New York Times, February 19, p. 12; May 18, p. 5; May 19, p. 6.

some obviously Catholic sources—and some whose motivation cannot be definitely determined—stress the barbaric and idolatrous origins of the Indians.¹⁰³ Francis C. Kelley presents the true picture of Mexican history as follows:

The Catholic Church drew Mexico up from the blackest savagery ever known to a people; put her on the road to progress and culture; showed her children by examples taken from among their own numbers what powers were theirs; made out of them governors and teachers, artists and publicists, philosophers and statesmen; or gave them schools, and a alphabet through which alone their language and story have been preserved; taught them to design and build the finest architectural masterpieces on this continent; Christianized them and civilized them; before the ruthless hands of greed and personal ambition began the work of destruction.¹⁰⁴

Not all the arguments of American Catholic spokesmen are excessively emotional. However, two of the most reasonable expressions

¹⁰³In 1926 much attention is given to archeological expeditions to Mexico and their findings about ancient Indian civilization. Many of these articles appearing both as features in the daily press and in United States periodicals stress the advanced aspects of the Mayans and other ancient Indian civilizations. They, along with coverage given to the present Indian renaissance in Mexico, tend to encourage pride and dignity in Mexican Indian racial history. These articles that are appreciative of the Mexican Indian and his past make all the more noticeable articles such as Lewis Spence, "Church and State in Mexico," The Nineteenth Century and After, C (November, 1926), 668-69, Thomas F. Lee, "The Mexico of To-day: Its Race Heritage and Its Political, Economic and Social Systems," The Mentor, XIV (April, 1926), 1-14, "The Last Stand of the Indian," The Outlook, CXLIV (September 22, 1926), 110-13 and in some ways D. H. Lawrence, "A Sunday Stroll in Sleepy Mexico," Travel, XLVIII (November, 1926), 30-35, 60, that still propagate the concepts of inferior racial heritage. On p. 112 the article in The Outlook expresses doubt that the "Indian population can, unaided, raise themselves above their present level. In fact, it is doubtful whether they will ever travel along the path of civilization any farther than they are actually pushed by others."

¹⁰⁴The Survey, LVII, 19. Kelley presents the Church view of Mexican history after severe criticism of propaganda being fed to the American public about Mexican events and Mexican history.

of the Catholic position based their whole argument structure on the unquestioned assumption that Mexico should be like the United States, working toward eighteenth century expressions of American ideals. Many of their ensuing arguments are therefore weak, not in themselves, but because of their fallacious foundation. That the historical situations are different or that Mexico may not want to be a carbon copy of the United States never appears to occur to them.¹⁰⁵

Sources of Protestant opinion include articles in The Homiletic Review, The Methodist Quarterly Review, The Missionary Review of the World, and The Christian Century, comments and quotations in The Literary Digest, and newspaper reports. If Protestants have any fears of the Calles government attempting to extinguish all religious activities in Mexico, they do not show through their eager attempts to disclose why the Catholics, and not they, are feeling the axe of the Constitution's enforcement. They do not indicate that Calles is suspending the enforcement of the law with regard to Protestants, but instead argue that they, unlike the Catholics, are not breaking the law: "They are proceeding with their work and succeeding because they are loyal."¹⁰⁶ They contend that their views are in accordance with Mexican patriotism and "harmonious with liberty"; in fact, they point out that Protestants have been trying for fifty years to make the

¹⁰⁵Ibid., pp. 16-18; John A. Ryan, "Liberty and the Roman Catholic Church: I. The Catholic Position," The Nation, CXII (June 16, 1926), 660-61.

¹⁰⁶Alva W. Taylor, "The Ecclesiastical Strike in Mexico," The Homiletic Review, XCII (November, 1926), 365.

Mexican church autonomous; thus, the rule against foreign ministers does not hit them so hard.¹⁰⁷ Instead of accusing and protesting State actions, they turn the accusing finger against the Catholic Church whose political interference, extensive holding of Mexican property, and unenlightened dominance of the Mexican people seem to justify State action. In Protestant eyes the record of the Catholic Church in Mexico looks more like this:

The Mexican people had lived for three centuries under the crushing, unrestrained domination of Roman Catholicism in its worst form, and, as has been the case in every country where that Church has held practically unlimited power, it had by one form or another, by the prostitution of religious influence and sanctions, secured the ownership and control of a large proportion of the very best property of the country, and as in other countries had kept the great masses of the people in ignorance and in poverty.¹⁰⁸

Contrasting their own concepts of ministerial functions, Protestants point to such "ritualistic action" as Confession as means "by which the Catholic clergy has tried to control the illiterate and superstitious masses of Mexico."¹⁰⁹

Protestants tend to be positive in their statements about Mexico and the Mexican people. They not only show that there is less discrimination against Protestants and less persecution and danger to the Protestant missionary, but indicate the social progress of Mexico. They comment on Mexican progress in education, the greater equality of

¹⁰⁷Rev. G. B. Winton, "Today in Mexico," The Missionary Review of the World, XLIX (March, 1926), 200.

¹⁰⁸Bishop James Cannon, Jr., "Missionary Work in Mexico," The Methodist Quarterly Review, LXXV (April, 1926), 281-82.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 291.

the social classes, the growth of democracy, and the increase of the number of small land owners.¹¹⁰ In contrast to the more negative attitude of the Catholic Church, Protestant revelations of Mexican activities, as well as their missionary policies, tend to point out the character virtues and potentialities of the Mexican Indians.¹¹¹ Even in specific expressions regarding the Land and Petroleum Laws, Protestants emphasize their history and point out that among friends all such things can be worked out.¹¹² Being suspicious of present propaganda efforts, they also draw attention to the fact that in the past oil men have fostered elaborate propaganda campaigns that "more than once had this country by the ears with Mexico and on the verge of war."¹¹³

Protestant acceptance of the Constitution, Mexican laws, and the Mexican government as here to stay, the attempt of Protestants to work within Mexican law and to point out the positive conditions in Mexico while denying misleading reports are not necessarily caused by the great enlightenment of Protestants in 1926. In fact, some of the Protestant commentary confirms that for most Protestant missionaries and officials it was not actual enlightenment that led to such

¹¹⁰Rev. John Howland, "Fifty Years of Progress in Mexico," The Missionary Review of the World, LXIX (May, 1926), 357-59.

¹¹¹See N.W. Taylor, "Building a Church of God in Mexico," The Missionary Review of the World, XLIX (March, 1926), 197-99 for a Protestant expression of pride in Indian vision and resoluteness.

¹¹²B. B. Winton, "Mexico We Have Ever Near Us: IV," Letter to the editor, The Forum, LXXVI (August, 1926), 313-14.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 313.

arguments, but the fact that such rationales served their evangelical purpose. (Since the Revolution, Protestant evangelism was having it better than ever before in the Catholic-dominated Mexico.) The suspicion that the Protestants could be—if hit at the right place—just as stubborn and non-compromising toward the State as the Catholics, who maintained they were obeying a law higher than the State, is confirmed by Bishop Cannon. He writes that "any law passed by any government which denies to any followers of Jesus Christ the right to 'preach the gospel,' to be a direct witness for Jesus Christ is in direct conflict with the command of the Master, the King, to whom all genuine Christians must render first allegiance, and therefore cannot possibly be binding upon the consciences of Christian men and women."¹¹⁴ In his long discussion of mission work in Mexico, Bishop Cannon also reveals some condescending attitudes toward Mexicans as he talks about the time not yet having come for the Mexican takeover of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He shows little understanding of nationalism or anti-foreignism when it comes to Christ and his ministers.¹¹⁵

American liberals give historical perspective to the actions of the Mexican government that make its activity against the Catholic Church understandable to Americans and not appear so unfavorable to Calles; however, they do not necessarily go along with all of Calles'

¹¹⁴The Methodist Quarterly Review, LXXV, 284. Quickly after making this statement Bishop Cannon explains that it has no pertinence to Mexico now because under present interpretation of ministering no such attempt has been made.

¹¹⁵Ibid., pp. 296-97.

actions. Many express disagreement with some of his means especially his intolerance of diverse opinions and his restrictions on religious periodicals. As their more middle-of-the-road colleagues they sometimes question Calles' severity and inexpedient timing. However, American liberals overwhelmingly stress that the Church-State conflict is a domestic problem and are constant in their warnings against intervention and the propaganda attempts by those who would use the religious issue.¹¹⁶

American liberals present a harsh view of the reactionary Catholic Church in Mexican history. They stress that in times of revolutionary turmoil it has always sided with the reactionary forces against the Mexican people. They note that it even continues to undermine the law of the State by encouraging Catholic disobedience. That it is this political power, not religious worship, that the Mexican government is attempting to halt with its enforcement of the Constitution is the crux of the arguments of American liberals. They state that it is the Catholic Church who has closed its doors to worship by the strike, not any action by the State. They indicate "that it is entirely possible for the Church to continue to serve its worshipers without violating the law, if it is willing to do so."¹¹⁷

United States liberals use Mexican history not only to expose the Catholic Church's reactionary political role, but also to show the

¹¹⁶Arguments that are pro-State with the above qualifications can be most readily found in The Nation, The New Republic, The Survey, and to a more limited extent in Schools and Society and The Christian Century.

¹¹⁷"The Week," The New Republic, XLVII (August 11, 1926), 319.

Catholic Church as a cause of Mexico's economic and social problems.¹¹⁸ They even attempt to refute her role as the benefactor of the Mexican Indians. They point out the Church's enormous land holding to be a cause of Mexico's economic stagnation as well as a basis for political power. Along with the Protestants they uncover some of the manipulative means by which the great amount of this property was gained. Some radical sources attempt to show how the Church and its foreign clergy pursuing their own self-interests used and abused the Mexican people, taking their Mexican riches while opposing any educational reform that might interfere with their complete dominance of the superstitious, ignorant masses.¹¹⁹ Other more moderate authors speak in terms of the Church's historic failure to help the masses of the people by encouraging such reforms as education, land division, woman's suffrage, or even by doing such small, but important things as making marriage inexpensive.¹²⁰ One writer sums up the historic position of the Church as being wealthy, usually political influential, and on the side of the

¹¹⁸Such historical treatment tends to place that part of the Constitution which provides for the State's taking of Church property that is not being used for religious activities in a more favorable perspective.

¹¹⁹In "The Mexican Church on Trial," The Survey, LVII (October 1, 1926), 14-15, Carleton Beals shows the Church taking advantage of the poor people in a somewhat charlatan manner. The tone of his expressions in this article and even more directly in his August 18, 1926, article, "The Mexican Church Goes on Strike," in The Nation, CXXIII, 145-47 reflect the skeptical tendencies of twentieth century scientism. In this latter article he even states that the Catholic Church in Mexico is on the defensive "being crushed between the Indian renaissance on the one hand and the machine-age skepticism on the other."

¹²⁰"Mexico and the Catholics," The New Republic, XLVII (July 28, 1926), 269.

propertied. He makes a revealing remark about the nature of the Church's role in Mexican history when he says, "and it has steadily opposed the radical and revolutionary efforts of reform, even when they were led by Catholic priests."¹²¹

If there is still question as to what difference historical perspective can make when the lives and rights of Americans are involved, then turn to the article of Hubert Herring in the April 29, 1926, issue of The Christian Century. He is an individual whose occupation on his passport is listed as clergyman. As a result, during the religious conflict he is detained at the border until the immigration authorities can check with Mexico City. Despite his own personal inconvenience while he is being held, his whole being proclaims "VIVA MEXICO." Why? Because as his rights are being violated, his awareness of Mexican history makes him realize that at this moment he as an individual represents to the authorities El Clero and the authority acts as a Mexico that "has found its voice." After an impassioned review of the killing and robbing in the name of the cross and the failure of the Church to educate or help the Mexican but instead always siding with reactionary forces, he indicates that "the wonder is that there lives a Mexican who will allow the cross to gleam from a church steeple in all the land."¹²²

¹²¹James G. McDonald, "Church or State?" The Survey, LVI (September 1, 1926), 589. This remark is suggestive of how two very different interpretations of the clergy's role in Mexican history can be supported by history if only the right selections are made.

¹²²"In Hoc Signo Vincas," XLIII, 548.

American liberals frequently warn the United States public against being misled by newspaper blowups of violence in Mexico and by the arguments and propaganda of those who seek an interventionist policy. Those writing from Mexico frequently show the lack of truth in daily press reports, maintaining that "the overt acts seemed to have taken place mostly in newspaper offices on this side."¹²³ When there is the beginning of a new interventionist propaganda attempt, they often attempt to decipher the guilty party, be it oil interests, the Catholic Church, or munition makers.¹²⁴ Emphasizing that the Mexican religious conflict is a domestic problem, they are especially critical of the Knights of Columbus who, according to one article, do not appear to realize that any intervention on the part of the United States would just have the opposite effects from what they want.¹²⁵ There are charges of "more or less collusion for propaganda purposes between big business and big ecclesiasticism."¹²⁶ Or, as others see it, the present propaganda effort requires "no collaboration to make it such, nor does that section of American press which instinctively reacts to commercial interest need to have any sympathy for the

¹²³Taylor, The Homiletic Review, XCII, 362.

¹²⁴"The Mexican Complications," The Nation, CXXII, 272, finds the Catholic Church the "culprit" behind the New York Times "inflammatory article" entitled "Declares Mexico Repudiates Claims."

¹²⁵"The Week," The New Republic, XLVII (August 18, 1926), 347. "A Call for Intervention in Mexico," The Literary Digest, XC, 11, reveals the New York World taking a similar position about the effects of United States intervention.

¹²⁶Miller, The Christian Century, XLIII, 411.

Catholic cause as such to begin to play up anything that is prejudicial to an administration hostile to an exploiting capitalism."¹²⁷ A

British analysis of the American scene is somewhat more descriptive:

The war-makers were becoming active again just as the Church dispute flared up. Many of them, it is evident, look upon the present situation as a godsend for their cause. They persuade themselves that the groans of a persecuted Church and the cries of exiled nuns can be exploited, in Protestant America, on behalf of their crusade, which is directed toward the mineral riches of Mexico.¹²⁸

United States liberals attempt to counteract the fallacious propaganda appeals in the name of religious liberty and toleration. They attempt to give reason for United States inaction even when they themselves admit some of the excesses of the Calles' government. Again by creating a larger perspective, they remind the American public of the laughable matter of the Mexican Catholics asking for "liberty of conscience" when historically, and even in twentieth century statements of the Pope, the Catholic Church has denied it to others.¹²⁹ They also point to the French Revolution and the Church-State conflicts since, indicating that the tides of history are on the side of the State. One writer goes so far as to characterize the current extremes of the Mexican government against religion as just the natural swing of the pendulum which, when the opposing forces make concessions, will

¹²⁷Taylor, The Christian Century, XLIII, 1108.

¹²⁸"Church and State in Mexico: A British Version," The Living Age, CCCXX, 572.

¹²⁹"Putting Mexico in Her Place," The Nation, CXXIII (August 11, 1926), 116.

lead to social progress.¹³⁰ Liberals overwhelmingly maintain that "when the war is over—when the Catholic Church accepts in Mexico, as it has apparently done in this country, the modern principle of a free church within a free State, it will suffer no more limitations than it does in other States where it has accepted those principles."¹³¹

Conclusions and Evaluations

Neither the Land and Petroleum Law nor the emotionally presented Mexican government activity against the Church stirred up the American people sufficiently for them to push for or even tolerate a moral crusade by the United States to clean up Mexico. Why? It was not the lack of an excuse in the form of widely circulated stories of indignations to American citizens, or from lack of an idealistic reason which was ever present in the form of religious liberty. It was not from the lack of propaganda techniques used in press coverage to stir up emotions. All of these were present, and what is more, controversial issues overlapped, making them even more potentially dangerous.

It was not Americans' extensive knowledge about Mexico and her present reform activities that protected Mexico from a United States confrontation. The mass of coverage of Mexican events gave only superficial treatment, frequently transmitting misleading stereotypes and at best dealing only with the current crisis.¹³² There are those

¹³¹Taylor, The Homiletic Review, XCII, 364.

¹³²There were a few very perceptive articles about Mexico's attempts to find dignity through her Indian renaissance, her progressive education reforms, her problems as an underdeveloped economy, and her surging nationalism. However, these were relatively scarce.

who with some justification argued that good news about Mexico never is printed in the United States press.¹³³ Even the opposite side in the religious issue argued that "we hear of Mexico only when there is a fight on below the Rio Grande. . . . We are not fed history but propaganda. Ninety-nine per cent of Americans know absolutely nothing about Mexican history or Mexican conditions but what they learn in that way."¹³⁴ Perhaps the criticism of the press by both sides in the religious conflict indicates that the propaganda of the one side was effectively countered by the propaganda of the other. It is true that in periodical sources more articles draw attention to the dangers of an inflaming and distorted propaganda campaign in behalf of intervention than there are examples of these efforts. However, the daily press—a completely different story—is not being considered in making such a generalization.

Why did the American people and many of its opinion makers not respond to the 1926 trumpet call of a righteous war in the name of humanity and moral uprightness? Was it the disillusionment remaining from the failure of the crusade of World War I? Was it the suspicions of the oil industries after the Teapot Dome scandal? Or was it the preoccupation with riding the prosperity wave, with "having a good time" and amassing the concrete pleasures of material goods? Perhaps it was just the counteraction of one propaganda campaign by that of

¹³³Jump, The Christian Century, XLIII, 1420.

¹³⁴Kelley, The Survey, LVII, 16.

another. Did Americans, known for their idealism and belief in their institutions as the best, feel as some journalists expressed that Mexicans should be left to experiment with whatever they liked? Did they really concur with what one labor leader expressed that United States ideals and institutions were not always appropriate for other countries? The strength of the public determination for the United States to stay out of war with Mexico is indicated in its continuance throughout the year even though under a great amount of pressure from highly emotional and more subtle forms of propaganda. However, its cause and the part it actually played in restraining a more interventionist administration policy is a subject of conjecture.

The fact that American opinion was divided is of the greatest significance to understanding why Mexico after 1916 was able to escape United States military intervention and even any nullifying pressure on its property reforms which endangered the rights of American citizens. Division of opinion existed both among and within different groups of the American people.¹³⁵ There are indications that even American businessmen were divided in the type of policy they thought would best serve their interests. Some bankers, mid-continent oil men, and those in the Southwest interested in trade did not concur with an interventionist United States policy. A feature article in the New York Times on March 21, 1926, demonstrates the feeling of resistance

¹³⁵Rippy, Current History, XXIV, 333; Charles A. Beard, "Americans in Mexico," Review of The United States and Mexico, by J. Fred Rippy and The Rosalie Evans Letters from Mexico, The New Republic, XLVIII (October 13, 1926), 225.

to the interventionist propaganda among many people in the Southwest:

To them it is not a question of Government ownership of oil, confiscation of land or expulsion of preachers. Bombastic oratory and diplomatic duplicity do not enter into it. They read about these things and are annoyed. They want to be restored to the status wherein they enjoyed a quiet, neighborly existence and traded back and forth with one another as friendly people should trade.

The border people don't want international misunderstandings and they don't want war. In the last fifteen years they have seen so much of these things that they are tired of them. Hence when some industrious correspondent writes to his paper in the East accusing Uncle Sam of abandoning his traditional policy—which the border people don't think he ever had—of extending full protection to American interest abroad, they suggest to the young man that he go way back and sit down.

Or again, when Representative Fairplay, from along the snowy Canadian frontier, waxes eloquent in Washington and twists the eagle's tail with lurid comments about Mexico's misbehavior, the people down on the line, who have to live with the question, cry out with one voice, 'Aw, dry up! You're rocking the boat.'¹³⁶

According to Charles Beard, J. Fred Rippy in his book The United States and Mexico does go on to indicate that it is the division within certain of the groups that really is the protective influence. He suggests that if American businessmen were to agree on the desired policy, then Mexico will either "yield," or the American government will be called to back them up regardless of the "laborers and the humanitarians, the churchmen and the plain people."¹³⁷

¹³⁶Owen P. White, sec. 4, p. 9.

¹³⁷The New Republic, XLV, 225-26.

CHAPTER III

1938: U.S. REACTION TO THE CÁRDENAS OIL EXPROPRIATION

Introduction

The diplomatic impasse that developed in 1926 was finally broken in 1927 by the astute diplomacy of the newly appointed Ambassador Dwight Morrow. Morrow succeeded in obtaining an accord with Mexico which eliminated the fifty year time limit on concessions and applied a broad definition to what constituted "positive acts."¹ That Morrow was able to reach a satisfactory agreement with Mexico was not because his aims were so different from those of Sheffield, but rather because he brought a new style to United States diplomacy in Mexico. Neither he nor the methods he used tended to alienate Mexicans and their leaders. His approach had no markings of condescension; there was no underlying attitude that American civilization was superior to Mexican. Instead, being sincerely appreciative of Mexicans and their culture, his manner was that of embracing others as equals. It was his cooperative and appreciative spirit that got the United States through doors that would have been difficult to knock down. He gained an

¹To support a claim to sub-soil rights prior to the 1917 Constitution, it was necessary to have performed some "positive act" showing the actual working of the sub-soil. However, in accordance with this broad definition of "positive act" even having made a contract relative to the sub-soil was sufficient evidence of "positive act."

accord with Mexico on the interpretation of the property laws and their constitutional basis that lasted until 1938.

The most serious blow to American property rights by the Mexican Revolution did not come until the presidency of Cárdenas. Prior to that in 1917 and 1926, we have been seeing the United States react to potential danger as seen in provisions of the Constitution and in the laws enacted to enforce those provisions. As noted especially in 1917 there were many who dismissed the seriousness of the provisions affecting American property rights as well as the Constitution's religious restrictions. They indicated that it was unlikely that such provisions would ever be enforced in such a way as to be threatening. Even in 1926 one still finds remarks that reveal a lingering attitude in the United States that "constitutions and laws in Mexico have been largely a matter of paper documents."² However, during the presidency of Cárdenas, there is concrete action in abundance. Under Mexican agrarian laws Cárdenas expropriates more land—including land of American citizens—than the total of all presidents before him. Even more dramatic, after years of wrangling over labor demands with the American and British oil companies refusing to comply, Cárdenas seizes the oil properties in March, 1938. Observance of American reaction to this dramatic oil expropriation—frequently intertwined with the agrarian expropriations in United States diplomacy—allows a more complete picture of United States response both to the theory of revolutionary concepts and to their actualization.

²"The Progress of the World," The American Review of Reviews, LXXIV (September, 1926), 232.

Of interest to a reader of 1938 journalism is not only American opinion regarding Mexican expropriation, but the degree to which this oil expropriation was a surprise. Another striking feature is the extent to which American views of appropriate United States policy are influenced by the extenuating international circumstances. As in 1917 when the world embroilment in war increased the desire for Mexico's friendliness, but also increased the suspicions of German influence and danger to British and American oil interests, so in 1938 the aggressions and defense pacts of Germany, Italy, and Japan loom threatening at a time when Great Britain's biggest non-Mediterranean supply of oil is jeopardized by Mexico. With the British putting pressure on the United States for effective action, there are those who question whether the Monroe Doctrine and the Good Neighbor policy have not come to odds. There is general concern about how our policy toward Mexico after the oil expropriation will affect our relations with the rest of Latin America, especially in this time of international tension.

The Oil Controversy as Presented by the Daily Press

When Mexican expropriation of the oil properties occurs, it is not under the much feared and protested Article 27 of the Mexican Constitution but instead under Article 123, as a result of a big conflict between the oil companies and labor that leads to federal arbitration. Maintaining the financial impossibility of their operating under the terms of arbitration, the case of the oil companies goes through the Mexican courts in the early months of 1938. After

legal channels are exhausted, the question of what is to be done ends up in the hands of Cárdenas, whose decision is finally announced March 18, 1938.

It is doubtful if many of the readers of the New York Times were any more prepared for Cárdenas' expropriation announcement than State Department officials appeared to be. All through the month of January the New York Times tended to show Cárdenas "anxious" for a compromise.³ Even up to the announcement of the oil expropriation, extensive coverage is given to Mexican economic difficulties which are pointed out to be all the more reason for expecting Mexico to compromise.⁴ Cárdenas is shown to be pressed by financial difficulties and the danger to his agrarian program and other reforms already started.⁵ His need for the revenue provided by oil production is interpreted as a force making for a Mexican compromise.⁶ The subheading of a New York Times article on March 6 indicates that Mexican officials would even like the United States government to "Intervene to Prevent Halt in Petroleum Output!"⁷ British confidence that there will be a compromise since "the Mexican Government cannot afford to lose companies like the Mexican Eagle and its associates" is expressed by the stock of these

³January 16, 1938, p. 31; January 2, 1938, p. 3; January 24, 1926, p. 3.

⁴January 2, 1938, p. 38; March 6, 1938, p. 30.

⁵February 13, 1938, p. 14.

⁶January 16, 1938, p. 31.

⁷P. 30.

companies not only holding their own on the London Exchange but actually experiencing a slight rise.⁸ Even as late as the day before the expropriation announcement, a front-page article in the New York Times discusses the economic and international factors that make a compromise likely. It shows Cárdenas and even the unions as having been surprised to find out that the oil companies were not bluffing and now to be looking for a way out.⁹

Although the expectation of compromise is the general impression given by the New York Times coverage prior to March 18, 1938, a closer look reveals the possibility of trouble brewing. There is evidence of a firm, non-compromising attitude taken by the oil companies. There are also indications that some of the means of resistance chosen by the oil companies are backing Cárdenas into a corner.¹⁰ It is true that their cutting of production and withdrawal of funds from Mexico could be interpreted as a means of exerting pressure on Mexico to compromise, but such means of resistance could also have quite an opposite effect especially on a man of Cárdenas' character. An article by Frank Kluckhohn on February 25 perhaps allows one to see a little of the beginnings of Cárdenas' incensement that is basic to understanding his expropriation decision. Kluckhohn notes that after months of vacillation, Cárdenas has come out fully for labor. He also shows

⁸New York Times, February 26, 1938, p. 2.

⁹Frank L. Kluckhohn, March 17, 1938, pp. 1, 5.

¹⁰January 4, 1938, p. 4; January 16, 1938, p. 31.

Cárdenas accusing the oil companies of being responsible for the economic crisis in Mexico.¹¹ The extreme statements of Cárdenas quoted by the New York Times on March 9 show his aroused emotions and indicate that he is fed up with the oil companies' lack of conciliatory action and their attempts at political influence:

Petroleum companies have intervened in the political and economic affairs of our country and have never recognized their debts under concessions granted by Mexico's former dictators . . .

It is worth while to meet the present difficulties in order to terminate forever the economic and political denomination of the petroleum companies. These companies have always shown absolute lack of spirit of conciliation since they withdrew their accounts from Mexican banks and executed other financial manoeuvres causing economic difficulties.

I consider it a patriotic duty to grasp this opportunity the companies themselves offer, since the country will come out the winner.¹²

Although the reader's attention is not drawn to it, these statements of Cárdenas appear in hindsight to be a key to anticipating his future action.

Prior to the announcement of the expropriation on March 18, the New York Times coverage of Mexican events includes not only the developments in the oil controversy, but extensive news on Mexican tariffs and other financial events, reports of her trade with Japan, reports on internal violence and the cause of border revolt, and speculations about the Fascist danger in Mexico and where it centers. A large proportion of the lengthy discussions of the Mexican

¹¹p. 1.

¹²Frank L. Kluckhohn, March 9, 1938, p. 12.

situation are by the New York Times correspondent, Frank L. Kluckhohn. (Kluckhohn is later accused by a fellow journalist as being one of three correspondents responsible for a shift in the tone in the United States Mexican policy.¹³) For newspaper coverage, Kluckhohn's articles are exceptional in their breadth of discussion and consideration of complicating aspects of the issues. Perhaps this partially explains why within Kluckhohn's articles, one can find statements of Cárdenas indicative of possible expropriation in addition to the general emphasis that economic and international factors favor compromise. Kluckhohn draws a mixed picture of Mexico, appealing in some of its aspects of realism, but certainly not one that is very sympathetic to either Mexico or to Cárdenas. His coverage of the oil issue is not directly from the viewpoint of the oil companies, but with the information he provides, a reader does see the position of the oil companies as quite reasonable. He also points out that it is not just oil at stake, but the place of all foreign capital in Mexico.¹⁴

In contrast to the Washington Post where the coverage of Mexican affairs in March prior to the expropriation announcement amounts to one article, the Chicago Tribune gives extensive details regarding the day-to-day status of the oil controversy. Interestingly enough, most of this detailed information in the Chicago Tribune appears in a factual tone in the financial section of the paper. The oil companies

¹³L. O. Prendergast, "Press-War on Mexico," The Nation, CXLVII (September 3, 1938), 222-23.

¹⁴March 13, 1938, p. 6.

are shown as determined not to yield on the labor dispute, but to remain firm to the end.¹⁵ The Chicago Tribune even makes note of a possible compromise offer by Mexico to make up the difference between the wages offered by the companies and those of the arbitration award.¹⁶ As the appeals of the oil companies are denied by the Mexican courts, the Chicago Tribune reports in a factual manner the steps taken by the Mexican government to enforce the award.¹⁷

The factual reporting in the March news columns of the Chicago Tribune appears untainted by any critical undertone. The news columns give no cue of the very critical attitude of the Chicago Tribune editors toward what is being done in Mexico and toward current United States policy. A March 2 Chicago Tribune editorial reveals itself somewhat cynical toward Mexican reform programs. Attempting to be realistic, it shows the economic failure of such programs as land redistribution and accuses Cardenas of calling for an international congress to protest German air raids merely as a means to divert his people's attention from such failures.¹⁸ It ridicules the Good Neighbor policy charging Washington with conceding the silver purchases "just as the Cardenas government was raising prohibitive tariffs against American goods." It comments that this is "a bit of reciprocity in reverse explained by the need the government in Washington found

¹⁵March 6, 1938, sec. 2, p. 5; March 15, 1938, p. 19; March 16, 1938, p. 27.

¹⁶March 8, 1938, p. 23.

¹⁷March 15, 1938, p. 15; March 17, 1938, p. 25.

¹⁸p. 12.

for trying to help the Mexicans over some bridgeless difficulties." According to the editors of the Chicago Tribune Mexican tariff increases are one more link in Mexico's "drive against American capital which the country needs, and the expropriation of American-held lands without suitable or satisfactory compensation."¹⁹

Prior to Cárdenas' announcement on March 18, there had been no mentioning of the possibility that Mexico might expropriate the major United States and British oil companies by either the New York Times or United States periodicals in 1938, or by the Chicago Tribune and the Washington Post in their March coverage. The possibility of a temporary receivership was the most serious alternative considered in American coverage of Mexican events.²⁰ According to a statement of Ambassador Daniels carried by the Associated Press, even for the United States government "the expropriation was a bolt from the blue." Daniels explains that "neither President Roosevelt, Secretary of State Cordell Hull nor I knew about the expropriation in advance. The general impression here was that there would be a government receivership."²¹

The March 19 news coverage of Cárdenas' announcement of the expropriation decree is neither critical nor emotional in tone. The front-page reports in the New York Times, the Washington Post, and the Chicago Tribune on March 19 are factual in tone and informative in

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰See the Chicago Tribune, March 17, 1938, p. 25 for the mentioning of a possible receivership.

²¹Josephus Daniels, quoted in the New York Times, March 21, 1938, p. 5.

their review of the oil controversy and their coverage of related financial events in Mexico. The New York Times notes the portions of Cardenas' speech that explain why the expropriation was necessary. The Washington Post shows the oil companies surprised but calmly preparing for further legal battle.²²

Although the initial United States reports on the Mexican expropriation of some \$200,000,000 of American and British oil investment were devoid of any undercurrent of pressure upon either Mexico or the United States for action, this was a temporary phenomenon. There is quite a difference in the tone of the front-page article in the New York Times on March 20 from that of March 19, even though they are written by the same author. Whereas the earlier article was a factual account of the oil takeover, the latter shows Mexican events as more of a "campaign against foreign industry" with the government-backed unions out to nationalize the mines as well.²³

Also beginning March 20, the oil companies' views of events get extensive attention. Extensive quotations are taken from W. S. Parish, President of the Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey, and H. F. Sinclair, chairman of the executive committee of the Consolidated Oil Corp. They show the benevolent treatment of their Mexican employees, pointing out the far higher pay they received than that of other Mexican workers. Parish stresses the amicable spirit and good intentions held by the

²²March 19, 1938, p. 11.

²³Frank L. Kluckhohn.

oil companies during the negotiations.²⁴ The statements of Sinclair are far different in tone from the more reasonable Parish. Sinclair shows Mexican actions as a sinister plot designed to force a situation where the oil property could be taken. He implicates both the Mexican government and the "labor politicians," and attempts to show the actions of the syndicate officials as divorced from the desires of the workers.²⁵

The immediate response of the daily press to the oil expropriation includes news of the following: American families fleeing the oil districts in Mexico; the overwhelming support of Cárdenas by the Mexican people, who hail the expropriation decree as a proclamation of economic independence; and most of all, a focusing of attention on the financial chaos in Mexico that could settle the oil dilemma or even cause the downfall of the Cárdenas government. Although somewhat of an exaggeration, the concluding paragraph of the Chicago Tribune's first report on the oil expropriation captures the essence of the daily press reaction to events in Mexico: "The shutdown of the oil industry passed almost unnoticed in a night crowded with fast developing events which may bring Mexico to the verge of economic chaos."²⁶ Reports are given on the oil controversy; however, major attention of the news columns is turned to the foreign-owned mining industry, the fluctuation

²⁴New York Times, March 20, 1938, p. 20. Many of the quotations of this special New York Times article are also carried or paraphrased by the Chicago Tribune, March 20, sec. 2, p. 5.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶March 19, 1938, p. 1.

of the value of the peso, and the heightened economic peril of Mexico.

The efforts of the Roosevelt administration to be a "good neighbor" are evident both prior to the announcement of the oil expropriation and immediately thereafter. The press comments that it is unlikely that the State Department will protest the oil expropriation until the oil companies have at least exhausted Mexican legal possibilities.²⁷ Statements to the press emphasize the assurances given by Cardenas that there will be compensation. Not only does there appear to be no immediate plans for United States protest, but the article headlines in the New York Times on March 22 suggest that the "U.S. Acts to Heal Rift." Statements of Secretary Hull explain that the United States is studying the expropriation laws and keeping close contact with Daniels regarding the situation. Hull also dismisses questions regarding the silver purchases from Mexico; he points out that these are considered to be solely a monetary matter.²⁸

Between the time that the State Department indicates it is taking no immediate action but allowing the oil companies to pursue appropriate legal channels in Mexico, and the March 28, 1938, announcement that the United States is suspending its silver purchases from Mexico, there are many editorial comments critical of Mexico and of Washington's

Chicago Tribune, March 21, 1938, p. 8; New York Times, March 20, 1938, p. 31; March 21, 1938, p. 5; March 25, 1938, p. 18.

March 22, 1938, p. 5. Perhaps the New York Times headline is a little misleading. The Chicago Tribune, March 22, 1938, p. 2, reports basically the same information only choosing to stress the seriousness of Kellogg's concern expressed in a phone call to Daniels and entitles it "U.S. Presses for a Mexican Truce on Oil."

lack of action. Even the editorial comment of the New York Times points out that what Cárdenas says about compensation sounds fine; however, when one considers the fulfillment of Cárdenas words, Mexico's record shows that it has not even paid the interest on the bonds given to those from whom land was seized earlier. It reproaches the Roosevelt administration for its lack of action, noting that it "has given no sign that it is seriously perturbed," and calls at least for a suspension of the silver purchase which it considers economically unsound anyway.²⁹ The March editorials of the Washington Post take a very anti-Cárdenas interpretation of the oil controversy.³⁰ In addition to their insults to Cárdenas' motives and character and the predictions of Mexican failure in running the oil industry, the editorial comment of the Washington Post refers to United States policy as "misguided philanthropy."³¹ Similar to an earlier editorial of the Chicago Tribune, it notes that the United States is buying silver from Mexico at high prices that really means we are giving Mexico a subsidy while Mexico is raising her tariffs and even expropriating our property.

Even much of the "factual" news about Mexico appearing in the daily press between the announcement of the oil expropriation, March 19,

²⁹March 25, 1938, p. 18. This editorial is curiously interesting in that with regard to Mexican compensation it takes a tone quite similar to that taken later by Secretary Hull in his controversial July letter to Mexico.

³⁰Within its "Letters to the Editor" column, the Washington Post does print letters from those of opposite persuasion.

³¹March 23, 1938, p. 8; March 21, 1938, p. 6; March 26, 1938, p. 6.

and the first action taken by the United States on March 28 is of an incriminating nature. The daily press draws attention to the fact that union guards were posted on oil properties and work was stopped while negotiations were still supposedly going on.³² There are reports in the Chicago Tribune and the New York Times that Cárdenas is preventing any information "favorable to the oil companies and American interests" from being printed or circulated in Mexico.³³ Frank Kluckhohn even warns that Cárdenas is circulating propaganda among American liberals, Leftist groups, and labor unions to convince them of the "'legality' of the government's actions" so that they will serve as an internal pressure on the State Department.³⁴ "Factual" reports also indicate that despite Cárdenas' words of commitment to democratic countries, it is a likely possibility that Mexico is accepting a deal with Japan in order to find markets and transportation for its oil.³⁵ Even the Mexican justice in the oil controversy is questioned by J. R. Carmical. He suggests that one of the Supreme Court Justices should not have

³²New York Times, March 23, 1938, p. 11.

³³New York Times, March 23, 1938, p. 11; Chicago Tribune, March 23, 1938, p. 25.

³⁴New York Times, March 27, 1938, pp. 1, 29. Kluckhohn attempts to negate the influence of these groups who he implies have been duped by Mexican propaganda.

³⁵Washington Post, March 26, 1938, p. 2; New York Times, March 24, 1938, p. 15.

sat on the Labor Board case because of his predisposition in the matter.³⁶

Even within this short period of a little more than a week, the New York Times brings to fore many fundamental questions regarding the expropriation dilemma. Questions as to "Where will [the] movement stop? Can the Government succeed? What will be the effect upon trade?" are brought up for discussion with regard to the danger the Mexican expropriation holds for United States interests. There are indications that if Mexico succeeds in getting out of this economic and diplomatic situation, "then it is logically to be expected that the government will gradually take over other foreign industries and probably follow an increasingly Leftist course."³⁷ There are also suggestions that if Mexico is allowed to get by with taking the property of American citizens, then there will be movements in other Latin American countries attempting to do likewise.³⁸

The announcement of the suspension of silver purchases is accompanied in the daily press by statements emphasizing that this action was taken before, not after, Secretary Hull's meeting with the representative of the four oil companies.³⁹ There are several observers

³⁶New York Times, March 27, 1938, sec. 3, p. 3. Carmical supports his charge by relating previous expressions of the Supreme Court Justice stating that Mexico should "impose its domination on foreign capital as an example to other countries" and that "the duties of a Supreme Court Justice were to pass on issues from a revolutionary political aspect and not from a basis of law."

³⁷Frank L. Kluckhohn, New York Times, March 27, 1938, sec. 4, p. 7.

³⁸New York Times, March 27, 1938, sec. 3, pp. 1, 3.

³⁹Washington Post, March 28, 1938, p. 1.

who note that it was Great Britain that applied the "effective pressure" for bringing about this action by the United States.⁴⁰ Government statements do not actually link this action of the Treasury Department to the Mexican oil expropriation, but the articles in the daily press are based upon "well informed persons" who do.⁴¹ Immediate response indicates widespread American approval of the silver purchase suspension, even though its consequences to the tottering Mexican economy could be disastrous for the Cárdenas government. This blow to the Mexican economy, the effects of which all are waiting to see, is followed by a United States protest of the oil seizure, which is commended by the Chicago Tribune as evidence of vigorous United States action.⁴²

Major Arguments of American Reaction

The arguments used by Americans in response to events in Mexico reveal the growing complexity of international economic and political relations. No longer could a simple sending of United States troops be offered as an effective way of handling Latin American problems. The world of 1938 was one in which even Americans eager to force

⁴⁰Chicago Tribune, March 30, 1938, p. 21; "Silver-Dollar Diplomacy," Time, XXXI (April 4, 1938), 11.

⁴¹Chicago Tribune, March 28, 1938, p. 1.

⁴²March 30, 1938, p. 21; Arthur Sears Henning, March 31, 1938, p. 5. It is not until July that Secretary Hull enunciates a really staunch position regarding Mexican expropriation. However, after more than a week of absolutely no action by the United States government in response to the Mexican oil expropriation, the suspension of the silver purchase followed by any protest perhaps did look like vigorous action.

Mexico into submission on the oil question had to consider the dangers—both economic and political—in creating a wave of "anti-gringoism."⁴³ Thus, it is not just those sympathetic to the Mexican reform program that point out all the dangerous ramifications of possible United States responses to the Mexican expropriation. Even among American businessmen there are those who see the necessity to consider the multiple repercussions of alternative policies as they attempt to determine what would best serve their trade and investment interests.

The international entanglements that characterize 1938 are reflected in more ways than one in the arguments regarding the United States reaction to the Mexican oil expropriation. Not only is the Mexican situation frequently discussed in terms of international dangers, but the arguments used are about as entangled and resistant to segregation as world ideologies. Persons of differing viewpoints often use common subjects in their discussion of appropriate United States response to the Mexican action. Among such subjects most frequently considered are the dangers of Communism and Fascism in Mexico, the danger to other American investments in Latin America, a possible conflict between the Monroe Doctrine and the Good Neighbor policy, and a questioning of whether Mexico can actually run the oil companies.

Those who attempt to place a European label on the Mexican danger have some difficulty. Neither Communism or Fascism seems to exactly

⁴³"U.S., Mexico—and Points South," Business Week (April 2, 1938), p. 44.

fit all the facts of Cárdenas' Mexico, even for those most concerned with the totalitarian aspects of Mexican society. Thus, we find both terms used to describe Cárdenas and his reform programs, sometimes even by the same author. One of the most outspoken critics of Cárdenas' confiscation policies, Senator Allen from Kansas, states that the present Communism in Mexico will lead to a Fascist state. He explains that Spaniards in Mexico will take action since they "sympathize more with the Fascist than with the Communists."⁴⁴

The most frequent source of information on the Communist danger in Mexico is the United States Catholic periodical, The Commonweal. Writers for The Commonweal are not crusading against the Communist danger as Senator Allen with his emotional rampages against Cárdenas and his expropriation policies; the bulk of their anti-Communist charges are made as by-the-way remarks, or in anger when placed on the defensive by naive "pinks."⁴⁵ They are critical of the influence of the Mexican left on Cárdenas, centering many of their criticisms against the Communist Toledano.⁴⁶ They point out the Communist elements in Mexico not only in the danger of its Communist labor leaders, but also in State practices in the schools. A look at a Mexican classroom

⁴⁴Henry J. Allen, "Communism Across the Rio Grande: We Are Responsible for It," Vital Speeches of the Day, V (December 15, 1938), 133.

⁴⁵Harry Sylvester, "Communications: A Revolution Doesn't Come Off," Letter to the editor, The Commonweal, XXVIII (August 19, 1938), 430.

⁴⁶Ibid.; Randall Pond, "The Mexican Crisis," The Commonweal, XXVIII (August 5, 1938), 387-88.

reveals the State attempting to teach the children that "there is no God." Instead of belief in God, the children are being taught that it is the State that is the supreme authority from which all good things derive.⁴⁷

The more widely read Newsweek also points out the danger of leftist influence on Cárdenas. Its frequent column writer, Raymond Moley, takes a severe attitude toward Cárdenas and his "confiscation" of alien property. He infers that Cárdenas is a Communist: Any "objective observer" knows that "to criticize Cardenas is to invite answers from American Reds. The Cárdenas aims are their aims."⁴⁸

Charges of Fascism are far more extensive in the American journalism of 1938 than are the charges of Communism. A Fascist danger in Mexico is seen by both those arguing for a forceful United States policy and those in favor of a more conciliatory United States attitude toward the Cárdenas government. As early as January there are predictions that Mexico would be the next to go Fascist; Representative O'Connell gives specifics of how Germans are arming 100,000 under Cedillo.⁴⁹ Some Americans see the Fascist danger within the

⁴⁷Harry Sylvester, "Teacher Is Wonderful," The Commonweal, XXVII (April 15, 1938), 676-77. The effect of the harsh facts of the State indoctrination attempts is tempered by the tone of this article which is written in story form. The story of two little girls' day in school ends with the revelation that the State attempts at indoctrination were only changing what was said in the classroom, not what was really believed by the people.

⁴⁸Raymond Moley, "Cardenas Sows the Wind," Newsweek, XII (August 15, 1938), 40.

⁴⁹New York Times, January 23, 1938, p. 25; January 30, 1938, p. 22.

Cárdenas government, pointing out its present totalitarian aspects and the resemblances of Cárdenas to Hitler.⁵⁰ Others, having the Spanish Civil War on the forefront of their minds, fear a similar situation in Mexico. They point accusingly to Cedillo as the leader of a revolution supported by Mexican reactionary and Fascist elements, and possibly their foreign colleagues.⁵¹ Even after the Cedillo revolt is put down by federal troops before it had time to grow into a major threat, United States liberals still expound on the danger of a Fascist reaction aided by the Mexican economic depression. They indicate that the Cedillo affair was but "Fascism's first violent bid for power in Mexico" and a minor one compared to what could be in the future with so many enemies to benefit from a change in the Mexican government.⁵² Articles in The Labour Monthly and Foreign Affairs also point out the strength of the Fascist forces at work in Mexico.

⁵⁰Frank L. Kluckhohn, New York Times, January 9, 1938, sec. 8, p. 15; Kluckhohn, January 20, 1938, p. 1; Kluckhohn, February 2, 1938, p. 5; February 6, 1938, p. 30; February 23, 1938, p. 15; W. G. Fitzgerald, "The Mexico of Lázaro Cárdenas," The Nineteenth Century and After, CXXIV (July, 1938), 60; Roscoe B. Gaither, "The Mexican Expropriation of Oil Properties," United States Law Review, LXXII (June, 1938), 324.

⁵¹Maurice Halperin, "What About Mexico?," The New Republic, LXXXVIII (January 12, 1938), 272; "Revolt Against Oil," The Nation, CXLVI (March 26, 1938), 346; "The Class Struggle in Mexico—II," The New Statesman and Nation, XV (February 19, 1938), 281; "Will Mexico Follow Spain," The Living Age, CCCLIV (April, 1938), 160-62; "A Firm Hand in Mexico," The Nation, CXLVI (May 28, 1938), 606; "Trouble in Mexico," The New Republic, LXXXV (May 25, 1938), 62; Carleton Beals, "Mexican Bad Man," The New Republic, LXXXV (June 8, 1938), 122-24.

⁵²L. O. Prendergast, "Oil and Mexico's Future," The Nation, CXLVI (June 25, 1938), 716; "Shall We Aid Mexican Fascism?," The New Republic, LXXXV (June 1, 1938), 87-88; "The Struggle in Mexico," The New Statesman and Nation, XV (June 4, 1938), 941.

D. Graham Hutton in an analysis in Foreign Affairs concludes that the "Fascist-minded forces" are so much greater than any leftist tendencies that they will probably be victorious regardless of whether it is Cárdenas or someone else in power.⁵³

Many Americans are concerned about the possible effects on the Mexican economy of steps already taken by the United States government. The Mexican government with its many new programs was already in grave financial straits before the oil expropriation. Even Americans in favor of Cárdenas' agrarian reforms had advised Mexico against expropriating industry. They stressed the need for practical realism: Mexico needed the income from its industry to carry out its agrarian reform; also, United States forbearance must not be pushed beyond its limits.⁵⁴ The oil expropriation brought new problems to the Mexican economy. Mexico now was faced with finding markets and transportation for its oil at a time when the major British and American oil companies were trying to maintain a boycott of what they regarded as stolen oil. Both pro-Cárdenas and anti-Cárdenas sources of opinion cite the danger that Mexican oil will be sold to the Fascist powers. Those that favor Cárdenas as the best of the Mexican alternatives emphasize the fact that the democracies may be forcing him into such trade as the only means of economic survival. Others that are not sympathetic to Cárdenas or his economic problems note that regardless of his commitment

⁵³"The New-Old Crisis in Mexico," XVI (July, 1938), 639.

⁵⁴H. Banta Murkland, "Half-Way with Cardenas," The Christian Century, LV (January 12, 1938), 47.

to moral solidarity with the democracies, it is impossible to have faith in the words of a president that orders "arbitrary seizure of foreign investment."⁵⁵

It is not only the political effects of United States policy that worry Americans, but also the economic consequences for American trade. Reaction to the oil expropriation temporarily halts trade with Mexico because of the fluctuation of the peso. American businessmen involved in trade with Mexico fear that this loss could be more than temporary. If Mexico sells her oil to Germany, Italy, and Japan, then she will use these credits for purchases from them, thus cutting out an important market for United States goods.⁵⁶ Danger is also posed to other American investments in Mexico and Latin America by the unsettled state of affairs over the oil expropriation. Thus, to some American businessmen, a quick settlement of the oil issue is far more important than the specific terms received by the oil companies. Nevertheless, many of these same businessmen show awareness of the difficulties faced by Washington. Even though impatient for action to settle the oil controversy, they acknowledge the complications in shaping a policy that will save Mexico as a market for the United States,

⁵⁵Editorial, Washington Post, March 26, 1938, p. 6.

⁵⁶"Mexican Oil to Berlin; U.S. Wary," Business Week, June 25, 1938, pp. 38-40.

not throw Latin America into the hands of Germany, and yet not set a precedent for future expropriation.⁵⁷

Other business interests emphasize the necessity for immediate and effective actions in behalf of the oil investments by the United States government in order to show the world where the United States stands on this Mexican expropriation. They show Cárdenas as beckoning other Latin American countries to follow the Mexican course of expropriation.⁵⁸ The oil companies are especially concerned with the effects of the Mexican oil seizure in Venezuela and Bolivia. And among many Americans, there is an assumed corollary between the safety of American oil claims in Mexico and "the safety of American investment throughout the world."⁵⁹ They argue that if Mexico is allowed to get by with its expropriation of American oil investment without making immediate compensation, then other countries will do likewise. Thus, among those who are greatly concerned with the danger to American business interests in Latin America, some adopt the oil cause as their own cause, whereas others are concerned mainly with only a smooth extrication.

Frequent reference is made to the Good Neighbor policy and the part it plays in determining the Roosevelt administration's reaction to

⁵⁷"Mexican Oil Baffles U.S.," Business Week, November 5, 1938, p. 49; "Mexican Oil to Berlin; U.S. Wary," Business Week, June 25, 1938, p. 40.

⁵⁸"Cárdenas Bids Latin America Expropriate Alien Property," Newsweek, XII (July 4, 1938), 13-14; Gaither, United States Law Review, LXXII, 335.

⁵⁹Moley, "Cardenas Sows the Wind," Newsweek, XII, 40.

the oil expropriation. In the early stages of the oil controversy and even immediately after the expropriation, there were indications that in accordance with the Good Neighbor policy the Roosevelt administration was staying out of Mexican internal affairs. It appeared to be allowing the Mexican government to work out this controversy between labor and the oil companies. When the United States does take its first steps to protest the Mexican action, a sigh of relief is expressed in many editorial columns. After the announcement of the suspension of the United States silver purchases, the editor of

Business Week writes:

A while ago there was reason to fear that President Roosevelt might carry his 'good neighbor' policy to the extreme of making the United States an easy mark for radical depredations by any Latin American country. Fortunately, however, he has now demonstrated that his conception of neighborliness is not stretchable to absurd limits. The 'good neighbor' policy does not mean that we should tamely submit to the confiscation of American property in Mexico and thereupon continue to give Mexico a subsidy from the United States Treasury.⁶⁰

In the months that follow this initial action, some Americans use the Good Neighbor policy as a reminder that the whole of Latin America is watching to see if the United States retreats to its old methods in dealing with the problem of the Mexican expropriation; others emphasize that the Good Neighbor policy must be reciprocal, and that it is Mexico's turn to be the good neighbor.⁶¹ An added complication for the Roosevelt administration was the British pressure for the United

⁶⁰"Rejoinder to Mexico," April 2, 1938, p. 56.

⁶¹Raymond Moley, "Hell Bent for Chaos," Newsweek, XII (July 18, 1938), 40; New York Times, March 28, 1938, p. 3.

States to take effective action against the Mexican oil expropriation. To some this situation exposed a possible conflict between the Monroe Doctrine and the Good Neighbor policy.⁶²

Reactions of Americans in 1938 to the Mexican oil expropriation vary from emotional denouncement of the "confiscation" and all that is Mexican, to defense of Cárdenas' actions as having been made necessary by the foolish policies of the foreign oil companies. This is not to say that all reactions are emotional in tone. Many of the arguments even of those that desire a stronger United States policy in protection of American property rights are in large part appeals to reason. However, they do frequently incorporate the more lively technique of slander. The character and reform program of Cárdenas become the focusing point for much of the emotional treatment. However, not all those who defend Cárdenas or who argue against the United States following a staunch and vigorous policy toward Mexico after the oil expropriation are pro-Mexican in their sympathies. There are some who are very much against the Mexican oil expropriation, yet because of the international situation see it in the best interest of the United States to promote a compromise settlement.⁶³

Americans most alarmed by the Mexican oil expropriation attempt to prove that it was an illegal act. They also maintain that there is

⁶²Frank L. Kluckhohn, New York Times, March 13, 1938, sec. 4, p. 6.

⁶³"Mexican Oil to Berlin; U.S. Wary," Business Week, June 25, 1938, pp. 39-40; George Creel, "Can We Prevent Chaos in Mexico?," Collier's [CII] (July 23, 1938), 50; "Puzzled by Mexican Oil Seizure," Business Week, March 26, 1938, p. 13.

a broader danger to all Latin America, and picture the Mexican workers as being no better off now under the Mexican government than before under the American and British oil companies. Pressing for a vigorous policy by the United States, some argue that a determined defense of property rights is necessary to maintain national self-respect and the respect of other nations.⁶⁴ Accompanying these specific arguments against the Mexican act of expropriation are pictures of a Mexican people living under a totalitarian ruler in the midst of economic chaos caused by the failure of the confiscatory programs of Cárdenas. Frequently the policies of the foreign oil companies are shown as noble and highly beneficial to the Mexican people and economy. It is not the motives or practices of the oil companies that are suspect, but those of the Mexican Labor Union and the Cárdenas government. The Mexican authorities are charged with having staged the controversy with the oil companies just so there would be an excuse for expropriation.⁶⁵

The concept that expropriation without immediate compensation is a violation of international law became a cornerstone of the State Department's position in its correspondence with Mexico over the oil and agrarian expropriations. The July 21 letter of Secretary Hull to Ambassador Nájera makes this stance particularly clear: "The taking

⁶⁴Allen, Vital Speeches of the Day, V, 134.

⁶⁵William S. Culbertson, "Foreign Interest in Mexico," Speech with discussion that followed, International Affairs, XVII (November, 1938), 773; New York Times, March 20, 1938, p. 31; Gaither, United States Law Review, LXXII, 324. A March 31, 1938, editorial in the Washington Post, p. 6, refers to Cárdenas' persecution of the oil companies.

of property without compensation is not expropriation. It is confiscation. It is no less confiscation because there may be an expressed intent to pay it some time in the future."⁶⁶ The clarified position of the United States is welcomed with relief by those who had all along maintained the necessity of upholding international law as the only means of protecting international investments and preventing the "stealing by governments" from becoming respectable.⁶⁷

Those who maintain the illegality of the Mexican oil expropriation do so not just in terms of international law, but also according to Mexico's domestic law. They go to great lengths to show how the procedures of Cárdenas did not fulfill the constitutional requirements. They point out, in addition to their being no provisions made for indemnification, that the properties also had not been declared a public utility as required by the Constitution before their expropriation. They cite court cases as well as Mexican law to prove that the oil expropriation "was not an orderly expropriation according to [Mexican] law; it was an arbitrary seizure contrary to law."⁶⁸

⁶⁶Quoted in "Mexico-United States: Expropriation by Mexico of Agrarian Properties Owned by American Citizens," The American Journal of International Law, XXXII Supplement (October, 1938), 184.

⁶⁷Culbertson, International Affairs, XVII, 781; Charles Cheney Hyde, "Confiscatory Expropriation," The American Journal of International Law, XXXII (October, 1938), 761.

⁶⁸L. H. Woolsey, "The Expropriation of Oil Properties by Mexico," The American Journal of International Law, XXXII (July, 1938), 522; Gaither, United States Law Review, LXXII (June, 1938), 325-28, 331-32.

Those arguing for a stronger United States policy in protection of American property rights point out that it is not just oil at stake, but the issue of the place of all foreign capital in Mexico.⁶⁹ Seeing Mexican ideas as contagious, some argue that the United States acceptance of Mexican promises of payment "mañana" would "clearly be the signal for similar expropriations in at least half a dozen countries."⁷⁰ Emphasizing that "one of the fundamental legal rights in democratic countries is the right to own property," one writer even goes so far as to point out that if the United States accepts this expropriation as part of international law then it can also be done in the United States.⁷¹

An immediate reaction to the oil expropriation by the Washington Post was to attribute it to the weakness rather than the strength of Cárdenas. As an earlier editorial of the Chicago Tribune had suggested regarding Cárdenas' protest to the German air raids, the Washington Post interprets Cárdenas' expropriation decree as a maneuver to distract the attention of the masses from the failure of his agrarian programs.⁷² Doubt is also cast on the value of any promise by Cárdenas. His words and actions do not always correspond as proven

⁶⁹Frank L. Kluckhohn, New York Times, sec. 4, p. 6.

⁷⁰Moley, "Cardenas Sows the Wind," Newsweek, XII, 40.

⁷¹Gaither, United States Law Review, LXXII, 33-34.

⁷²Editorial, March 21, 1938, p. 6. See above p. 129 for the March 2, Chicago Tribune editorial giving a similar interpretation to the motives of Cardenas.

in the oil expropriation; thus, his words should be taken lightly.⁷³ This lack of faith in Cárdenas has relevance both for interpreting his promises of compensation and to his claims of "moral solidarity" with the democracies.

Those who argue for a staunch United States policy frequently appear vehement in more than just their opposition to Mexican expropriation. They frequently appear anti-Mexican in their portrayal of most reforms of Cárdenas and even the Mexican people themselves. They not only point out Cárdenas' lack of economic wisdom—a point common to all Americans who write on Cárdenas' Mexico—but demonstrate how the Mexican people are not any better off now than earlier. They suggest that the peons have only changed masters.⁷⁴ This lack of improved conditions is also indicated to be true in the oil industry.⁷⁵ In contrast to what is portrayed as rather heroic efforts and accomplishments of foreign investors, Mexican leaders and the Mexican people are implied to be incapable.⁷⁶ There appears to be a complete lack of understanding of the Mexican dream and frequently an attitude of disrespect for her leaders. One author generalizing from the

⁷³Editorial, Washington Post, March 26, 1938, p. 6.

⁷⁴Frank L. Kluckhohn, "Revolution on a Silver Platter," The Saturday Evening Post, CCX (February 5, 1938), 71.

⁷⁵Gaither, United States Law Review, LXXII, 334-35; Chicago Tribune, March 27, 1938, sec. 2, p. 5.

⁷⁶See Allen, Vital Speeches of the Day, p. 131 for an example. Pointing out the lack of Mexican technical and organizational ability, the Washington Post indicates in its editorial, March 21, 1938, p. 6 that without foreign help, Mexicans are incapable of running the oil companies.

danger in Mexico, describes the situation as follows:

Ambitious social programmes, together with rising nationalism in countries which owe their economic development largely to foreign capital, have created an insecurity for foreign property which can only be dealt with by the determined insistence on the part of creditor nations on the strict observance of international law. Any other course will invite a flood of half-thought-out plans for social betterment sponsored by irresponsible politicians without either the power or intelligence to make use of the valuable property which they will seize.⁷⁷

Americans that show they are sympathetic to Mexico and defend Cárdenas even with regard to the oil expropriation do not argue theoretically for expropriation as a means of accomplishing a social revolution. They argue instead within the context of this specific situation that resulted in the oil expropriation. They refer to the "American stupidity" of the oil companies that made them even resist the Morrow compromise agreement and fight paying royalties pushed by Cárdenas in 1936.⁷⁸ They expose the oil companies attempting to be a "State within the State"; attention is drawn to the efforts of the oil companies to buy their way out of obeying the law and to their use of punitive techniques such as cutting production in order to put economic pressure on the Mexican government.⁷⁹ In this and other ways they give perspective to the expropriation decision; they show

⁷⁷Culbertson, International Affairs, XVII, 776.

⁷⁸Carleton Beals, "The Mexican Challenge," Current History, XLVIII (April, 1938), 29.

⁷⁹Anita Brenner, "The Situation in Mexico," The Menorah Journal, XXVI (October, 1938), 333; Hubert Herring, "Cardenas of Mexico," Harper's Magazine, CLXXVII (October, 1938), 499; "Revolt Against Oil," The Nation, CXLVI, 346; Ernesto Galarza, Washington Post, Letter to the editor, March 24, 1938, p. 8.

how Cárdenas was forced into it by the belligerent and non-compromising attitude of the foreign oil companies. J. Silva Herzog presenting the Mexican case to the American public argued that what really mattered to the oil companies was not the payment of higher wages, but "allowing a precedent to be established in Latin America of intervention in their financial affairs by legal or by any other means."⁸⁰

Placing the oil expropriation decision in context with Mexican history and showing its legality in terms of Mexican law are other means used to create a more sympathetic view of the Mexican act. Many attempt to counteract the exaggerated and false picture of the Cárdenas government as either Fascist or Communist. Rather than indicating the oil expropriation as a part of a Communist drive to confiscate all industry, they emphasize the democratic, liberal reform aspects of Mexican society. They point to the encouragement of individual creativity in the schools and stress that in educating Mexican children for service to their society, there are no appeals to racism, no "hymns of hate" not even against the United States.⁸¹ They show many of the appealing aspects of Cárdenas' character, and note that he is more moderate than other Mexican alternatives.⁸² Some indicate that the attempt to label Cárdenas as a Communist is a trap of the Fascists.

⁸⁰"Mexico's Case in the Oil Controversy," International Conciliation, CCCXLV (December, 1938), 519.

⁸¹Ira W. Howerth, "Socialism in Mexican Schools," School and Society, XLVII (April 30, 1938), 561.

⁸²Hubert Herring, "Mexico Claims Its Own," The Nation, CXLVI (April 16, 1938), 441.

An article in The New Statesman and Nation reveals that Cárdenas considers his reform programs as preventive of another more radical revolution. "By tipping the scales for the workers and placing great handicaps on the freedom of the employers, he is 'inoculating the country against another violent revolution,' a revolution in which the workers as in Russia, would rise up and take everything."⁸³

American liberals in favor of Mexican reform are not the sole proponents of a moderate United States policy. They are sometimes joined by others who are sufficiently realistic to see the oil expropriation as a fait accompli, and thus, are primarily concerned with preventing further danger to American political and economic interests. Some businessmen, fearful of any United States action that might drive Mexico into the hands of the Fascists, also call upon the United States government to back a compromise settlement by the oil companies.⁸⁴ Similarly in attempting to present a clear image of Cárdenas and his reform programs, it is not just those obviously sympathetic to the Mexican reform that seek to separate fact from propaganda. There are quite a few attempts to figure out the enigmatic Cárdenas. Even Time, which is somewhat sympathetic to the oil companies in its interpretations, points out that Cárdenas "is no more a Marxian Socialist than

⁸³"The Class Struggle in Mexico—I," XV (February 12, 1938), 241.

⁸⁴"Puzzled by Mexican Oil Seizure," Business Week, March 26, 1938, pp. 13-14; "Mexican Oil to Berlin; U.S. Wary," Business Week, June 25, 1938, pp. 39-40; Abbot Maginnis, Washington Post, Letter to the editor, March 26, 1938, p. 6; Hubert Herring, The Nation, CXLVI, 442.

was King Arthur or Robin Hood. He is a purely Mexican radical and has no particularly high opinion of Leon Trotsky to whom he has given haven."⁸⁵

Those who give a more favorable perspective to the decision of Cárdenas to expropriate the oil properties tend to be very critical of the moralistic tendencies sometimes evident in State Department correspondence with Mexico. Even in April, Hubert Herring exposes the moralistic suasion that was probably in back of the decision to suspend silver purchases from Mexico:

The move was generally regarded as retaliatory, an answer to the high-tariff, land, and oil policy of the Mexican government. Though it is possible that Washington used this opportunity to take one step toward abandoning a highly questionable silver policy, one has a suspicion that Secretary Hull, despite his loyalty to the Good Neighbor doctrine, is not adverse to some chastisement of the erring Mexican. Hull is a born moralist. All deeds, personal or corporate, are either right or wrong. In a capitalistic world Mexico's action is wrong. It is taking other people's property. The proposal to punish Mexico for its own and our good is consonant with Hull's character. The decision to stop buying silver was probably his.⁸⁶

In the July 21 letter to Ambassador Nájera, Secretary Hull makes clear the United States position on the Mexican expropriation. Much to the consternation of United States liberals, he points out that it is not the purpose of Mexican expropriation that is at issue. Having stated that the purposes are "unrelated to and apart from the real issue," he goes on to maintain that expropriation without immediate

⁸⁵"Flows Plus Rifles," XXXII (August 29, 1938), 19.

⁸⁶The Nation, CXLVI, 442.

compensation is in fact confiscation.⁸⁷ By some Americans this stance by Secretary Hull is applauded as an appropriate verbal spanking for Mexico who has made no compensation; in accordance with the moral, "spare the rod and spoil the child," they maintain that Mexico has been spoiled by the United States who has "spared the rod" under the Good Neighbor policy. In contrast, American liberals continue to point out that the dangers of such treatment are great. They maintain that especially amidst the international complications such simple, moralistic answers can have tragic consequences.⁸⁹ Some even point to the statement of Hull as proof that there is no significant difference between this administration's policy and the policies of less liberal administrations; all have placed property rights over human rights.⁹⁰

⁸⁷Quoted in The American Journal of International Law, XXXII Supplement, 182, 184.

⁸⁸"Spoiled Neighbor," Time, XXXII (August 1, 1938), 7.

⁸⁹Herring, The Nation, CXLVI, 442; Burt M. McConnell, "Mexico Undergoes the 'Good Neighbor' Test," The Christian Science Monitor Weekly Magazine Section, September 7, 1938, p. 13.

⁹⁰Prendergast, The Nation, CXLVII, 225.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND EVALUATIONS

Press, Public Opinion, and U.S. Foreign Policy

An inquiry into the relationship of public opinion, press media, and United States policy is interesting, although usually speculative in nature. The press is said to reflect public opinion in a democracy; but in an age of highly skilled propaganda techniques it also is shown to make public opinion. There are those who hold that in the United States public sentiment helps to shape foreign policy; but others deny any major influence of public opinion over foreign policy except perhaps for conceding that it acts as an occasional restraining factor. Not only is the press (especially the major newspapers of the East) accused of influencing the formation of foreign policy, but it in turn is sometimes said to be used by the United States government for testing public opinion or preparing the public for new policies. Although inconclusive as far as supporting any one of these theories over the others, this analysis of United States journalism of 1917, 1926, and 1938 has yielded several suggestive incidents.

In early January, 1917, the New York Times in both its news and editorial columns does actively pursue a United States withdrawal of Pershing's forces. It advocates such a withdrawal even if Mexico does not sign the Atlanta Protocol. The New York Times takes this position before there is any indication of such a possible presidential

decision, and makes it appear reasonable, respectable, and in accordance with American national interests. It argues from military, realist, and humanitarian viewpoints, and prevents the feeling of any tinge of national failure in the withdrawal of these troops.

It is quite possible that the New York Times played an influential role in bringing about the official decision to withdraw United States troops from Mexico. And it is obvious that it helped to prepare the public for such an action. In contrast to the role of the New York Times in the Pershing withdrawal, there is definitely no such influence or foreknowledge with regard to the United States granting recognition to the Carranza government at the end of January, 1917. The New York Times remains silent on the possibility that Wilson might grant the Carranza government full recognition until the official announcement. In fact, both the news columns and the editorial opinion had for weeks stressed the weakened position of the Carranza government and the growing strength of Villa and other rebels. New York Times editorials had suggested that the United States should stop thinking of Villa as a bandit. They even implied that it was possible that the Carranza government might not last much longer.¹

In 1938 the influential role of the press is brought into the limelight. In an article in the September 3 issue of The Nation, L. O. Prendergast charges that the press is responsible for the significantly more staunch position taken by Hull in his July 21 note. In making this charge he cites three specific correspondents,

¹January 14, 1917, sec. 7, p. 2; January 25, 1917, p. 8.

Frank L. Kluckhohn, Raymond Moley, and George Creel and articles by them. He stresses especially the importance of Kluckhohn because of his position with the New York Times in addition to his publication in The Saturday Evening Post.² Reading the articles of the specific correspondents, as well as the press in general, does reveal that Prendergast's charges of a war by the press have some basis in fact. Kluckhohn and Moley, as well as newspaper editorials, do take stern positions regarding compensation long before the State Department. To varying degrees they do undermine confidence in Cárdenas and his government and do pursue a stronger United States response to the Mexican expropriations. As early as March 25, 1938, the New York Times takes a position quite similar to that expressed by Hull in July. It indicates that Cárdenas' words about compensation sound fine; but where is their fulfillment? Pointing to Mexico's past record, it notes that often not even the interest has been paid on the bonds given to those from whom land was seized.³

Another aspect of the interrelationship between the press, public opinion, and government policy is suggested by the nation-wide revelation of the Zimmermann note on March 1, 1917, and the unleashing of the Bolshevist specter in November, 1926. These are two obvious examples of government use of the press to make public opinion more receptive to a new policy. As early as January 15, 1917, the Chicago Tribune accuses Wilson of using the press. It suggests that Wilson

²"Press-War on Mexico," CXLVII, 222-24.

³P. 18.

has made unofficial announcements to newspapers in order to test public opinion regarding new policies. However, there are few in 1917 who, amidst the tide created by the revelation of the Zimmermann note, stop to consider the possibility that Wilson may have used the press to unite the American public behind him. In 1926, however, guardians of public opinion are alert, and apparently the public is resistant to being duped into a more belligerent policy toward Mexico. When a State Department official attempts to inspire the press to spread the story of Communism in Mexico and in Mexican activities in Central America, his use of the press is exposed. The Cleveland Press refers to this episode where the State Department attempts to create news without even taking responsibility for it as "Kellogg's Impropaganda."⁴

Evaluation of U.S. Journalism

The accusations of the press are numerous in 1917, 1926, and 1938, and they spring from a variety of sources. Both those on the right and left accuse the American press of distorting and perpetuating false impressions. They accuse it of providing news relating only to violence and United States-Mexican crises. They sometimes even charge it with conducting a propaganda campaign for either the conservative or liberal forces. It is true that in 1917 and 1926 far more attention is given to banditry, border conflict, religious persecution, and riots than to other equally important social and economic changes. However, it is also interesting to note that these very accusations, sometimes

⁴Editorial, December 2, 1926, p. 8.

combined with their authors' efforts to provide a more adequate and less misleading coverage of Mexican events, are also a part of American journalistic coverage.

I have been impressed with the existence of some excellent reporting on events in Mexico in the journalism of 1917, 1926, and 1938. There have been several very good, substantial analyses interpreting Mexican economic and social change, an occasional use of technical scholarship to provide perspective for present problems, and a large number of enlightened efforts to give perspective to the conflicting issues. I have also been impressed by the relatively few emotional harangues; these have been the exception rather than the rule. However, because of their vivid images and memorable quotations, I suspect that they may have had a much greater impact than their numbers alone would indicate.

Of all United States periodicals, I am most impressed with the coverage given to current Mexican events in 1926 issues of Current History. Current History provides a monthly account of current Mexican developments and several series of outstanding articles in which persons of differing viewpoints present the major arguments regarding the property and religious issues. Good coverage is also given to Mexican events by The Christian Century and The Forum in 1926 and by International Conciliation and Business Week in 1938. The single articles available in The Menorah Journal and Harper's Magazine in 1938 are also excellent. To be geared for a high school audience, the Scholastic gives outstanding coverage to Mexican

events and United States policy. Articles in the Scholastic: The American High School Weekly are amazingly informative and perceptive to be so brief.

Despite these impressive aspects, there is much to substantiate the charges of those that accuse the press of being misleading, superficial in content, and tending to leave American readers with stereotype impressions. Much of what has not been mentioned above as outstanding is at best superficial. The violence and chaos in Mexico assumes far more importance in the news than any constructive action. Especially during times of stress with the United States, much attention is given to rebel activities and other forces that insinuate the Mexican government is in grave danger. The frequent correlation of increased press attention to Mexican violence and rebel activity and times of strained United States-Mexican relations appears to be more than just coincidence. The misleading nature of some of these articles as well as their number suggests an attempt to tamper with the public view of Mexico and our Mexican policy. And to my disappointment, I found in 1938 no decrease in the number or in the irrationality of the statements of those who proclaim the sanctity of American rights even in foreign countries. In fact, the number of those journalists who argue against the activities of the Mexican government and for a staunch United States policy in protection of American property rights increases in 1938, although most of this increase is made up of those whose arguments at least have a facade of reason. Mexican violation of American property rights and the religious persecution are the subjects

of most of the emotional argument; however, extreme bias and American ignorance are revealed with regard to many Mexican subjects.

Even among authors that are sympathetic to Mexico, there is frequently a tendency for their writings to be wishful rather than realistic. Many are not untruthful in what they say, but untruthful in selecting certain aspects of a culture constantly over others; they, thereby, present a false picture of the whole. Within the journalism of 1917, 1926, and 1938, there is much to support the view that Americans conceive of Mexico in terms of certain oversimplified myths. One correspondent captures the essence of a portion of what has been taking place in American journalistic portrayal of Mexico. Writing in 1938, he points out that the American myth that Mexico was barbarous and Mexicans, bandits has now been replaced with a myth of Mexico as a "passive dream image. It is now the land of afternoon sleep and handicrafts, fiestas and mañana, Aztec memories and romantic murals, a land changeless in its pre-industrial peace since the days of Montezuma."⁵

Little information is presented on the geography of Mexico, the population, the diverse regions and their cultures; little is presented that would allow Americans to get behind the stereotypes and be able themselves to think through new situations that arise. As was true in 1917, the superficial trait of much of American journalism in 1926 and 1938 keeps American opinion dependent upon the evaluations of the press for every new problem that arises in United States relations with Mexico. There are articles that are excellent, but they are

⁵Freeman, Travel, LXX, 7.

still a rarity. Even enlightened authors frequently just pass on their conclusions, not the basic awarenesses that allowed them to arrive at such conclusions.

U.S. Reaction to The Property Issue

There is not a large amount of reaction in the United States in 1917 to the Mexican Constitution which contains several articles regarding foreign ownership of Mexican property. The New York Times and a few magazine articles present quotations and commentary on the meaning of the constitutional articles for United States citizens. However, most of the 1917 journalism is concerned with other things such as border conflict, rebel activity, and German influence. Many who would otherwise be anxious are calmed by the view they hold that constitutions are not often carried out in Mexico. Also, the events of World War I in which Mexico eventually becomes a benevolent neutral tend to neutralize any severity that might otherwise characterize United States diplomacy toward Mexico.

In 1926 religious persecution appears to arouse far more emotional response than the property issue. Public opinion, as indicated by newspapers and magazines, is very definitely against intervention or strained relations with Mexico. There is a great tendency—especially in the early months before the reaction to the Land and Petroleum Laws becomes somewhat inseparable from the religious, Tia Juana, and Nicaragua issues—to be suspicious of any government act that might derive from the influence of the oil companies. Isolationist tendencies of the people work hand in hand with the

suspicious of business influence on government to require more than just the property issue to embroil public opinion against Mexico.

In 1938, statements regarding the sanctity of property are more frequent than in 1917 or 1926. The oil expropriation also receives far more of the total coverage of Mexican events than the property issue in 1917 and 1926. However, in 1938 Americans are reacting not just to the possibility of the loss of property by Americans in Mexico, but to the actual seizure of American-owned agrarian and oil properties. And, what is called expropriation is considered by many as confiscation since there is no immediate compensation. Also, there appears to be an awareness that what American investors are facing is not just the issue in Mexico, but the security of foreigners holding property or risking capital in all underdeveloped nations. Some even suggest that perhaps this is a close to an age!

Even though American concern expressed in 1938 regarding the danger to American property rights is greater than in 1917 and 1926, this concern is not transferred directly into United States policy. American reaction to the oil expropriation and United States policy is complicated by the international situation. Although the world Fascist danger heightens Cardenas' problems at home and stirs great fear in the United States, in the long run it probably serves to ameliorate the United States reaction to the oil expropriation. Also, in 1938, even more obviously than in 1926, the business community is divided as to what constitutes the best policy toward Mexico after the oil expropriation. It is such fortuitous circumstances as the division of American opinion—including that of the business community—and

the overshadowing international complications that provide protective influence for the continuing Mexican Revolution.

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APPENDIX

The text of the new Mexican land act as quoted by the New York Times, January 6, 1926, p. 6.

Article 1—No alien shall acquire direct ownership in lands and waters in a strip of 100 kilometers along frontiers and of fifty on coasts nor be a shareholder in Mexican companies which may acquire such ownership in the same strip.

Article 2—In order that an alien may form part of a Mexican company which may have or may acquire ownership of lands, waters and their accessories, or concessions for the exploitation of mines, waters or combustible minerals in the territory of the Republic, he shall satisfy the requirements set out in the same section 1 of Article 27 of the Constitution, to wit:

That of agreeing before the Department of Foreign Relations to consider himself national in respect of the part of the property which pertains to him in the company; and not to invoke, in respect thereof, the protection of his Government with reference thereto under protection, in case of failing in the agreement, of losing for the benefit of the nation the property which he may have acquired or which he may acquire as a shareholder in the company in question.

Article 3—In the case of Mexican companies owning rural property for agricultural purposes the permit spoken of in the foregoing article shall not be granted when, through the acquisition to which the permit refers, there remains in the hands of aliens 50 per cent, or more of the total interests of the company.

Article 4—Foreign persons who may represent since prior to the going into effect of this law 50 per cent. or more of the total interest of any kind of companies owning rural property for agricultural [sic] purposes shall retain it until their death in the case of physical persons, or for ten years in the case of moral persons (corporations).

The provisions of this article shall not affect contracts of colonization concluded by the Federal Government prior to the going into effect of this law.

Article 5—The rights which are the object of the present law, not comprised in the foregoing article and acquired legally by aliens prior to the going into effect thereof, shall be conserved by their present owners until their death.

Article 6—When an alien person should have to acquire by inheritance rights the acquisition of which might be prohibited to aliens by the law, the Department of Foreign Relations shall give permit, in order that there be made the adjudication and that there may be registered the respective deed. In case any alien person should have to have adjudicated to himself by virtue of a pre-existing right

acquired in good faith, a right to those which are prohibited to him by the law, the Department of Foreign Relations shall give the permit for such adjudication.

In both cases the permit shall be granted upon the condition of transferring the rights in question to a person with capacity under the law within a period of five years, counting from the date of the death of the author of the inheritance in the first case, or from the adjudication in the second.

Article 7—Aliens who may have any right of those which are the subject matter of this law, acquired before the going into effect of the same, shall make a declaration before the Department of Foreign Relations within the year following the date of the promulgation of the present law, upon the understanding that if this is not done it will be considered that the acquisition was made subsequent to the promulgation of this law.

Article 8. Executed acts and contracts made against the prohibition contained in this law shall be void with full right. Failure to comply with Article 4 and 6 shall give rise to the auction of the property indicated therein.

Article 9. The law does not repeal the restrictions placed by special laws on alien persons to acquire rights within the territory of the Republic.

Article 10—For the effects of this law there shall not be considered as alienation of properties the leases of immovable property for a term greater than ten years to the extent which may be strictly necessary for the establishments or services with an industrial, mining, petroleum or other non-agricultural object on the part of the enterprise without prejudice to the provisions of the special laws.

Article 11. The Executive shall regulate the provisions of this law.

The main features of the petroleum law as quoted by the New York Times, January 10, 1926, p. 2.

Article 1. The ownership of all natural mixtures of carbons of hydrogen which are found in their natural deposits, whatever may be the physical condition thereof, is vested in the nation. In this law is understood by the word 'petroleum' all the natural mixtures of hydrocarbons of which it is composed, which are associated with it or are derived from it.

Article 2. The direct dominion of the nation, to which the preceding article refers, is inalienable and imprescriptible, and only with the express authorization of the Federal Executive, granted as provided in this present law and its regulations, may the works required by the petroleum industry be carried out.

Article 3. The petroleum industry is of public utility (sic); wherefore it shall enjoy preference as to any utilization of the surface of the land and in all cases in which the necessities of said industry require (it), the expropriation or occupation of the surface shall be admissible, having regard to the corresponding legal indemnity.

The petroleum industry includes: The discovery, reduction to possession, conveyance by pipe lines and refining of petroleum.

Article 4. Mexicans and civil and commercial companies constituted in conformity with Mexican laws may obtain petroleum concessions upon compliance with the provisions of the law. Foreigners, in addition to the foregoing obligation, must comply beforehand with what is provided in Article 27 of the present political Constitution.

Article 5. Rights derived from concessions granted in conformity with this law shall not be transferred, wholly or in part, to foreign Governments or rulers, nor shall such be admitted as associates or copartners, nor shall any right whatever in them be created in their favor.

Article 6. Everything relating to the petroleum industry is of exclusive Federal jurisdiction.